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MAGAZINES**  
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**CJR**

MARCH/APRIL 1994 ♦ \$3.50

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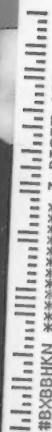
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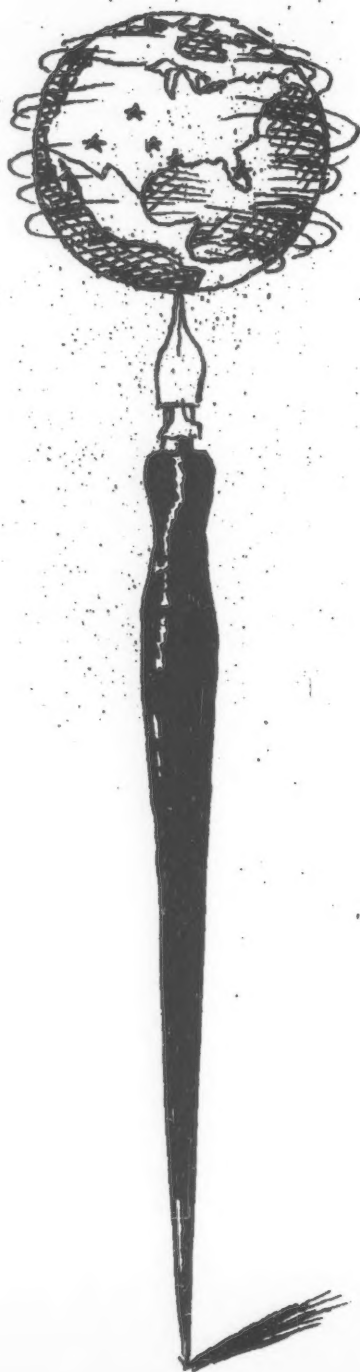


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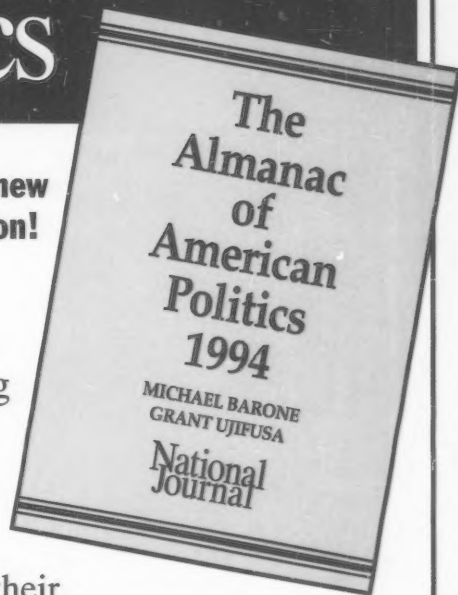
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MARCH/APRIL 1994

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TO HELP STIMULATE  
CONTINUING  
IMPROVEMENT IN  
THE PROFESSION,  
AND TO SPEAK OUT  
FOR WHAT IS  
RIGHT, FAIR,  
AND DECENT"

From the founding editorial,  
1961



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# LETTERS

## FDIC BEGS TO DIFFER

Your Laurel to Andrew Schneider and Peter A. Brown of Scripps Howard News Service for their series on the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (CJR, January/February) apparently assumed they told their readers the truth. By your description, they reported that the FDIC "called in the loans and mortgages of thousands of borrowers who had never missed a payment, seizing their homes, farms, ranches, and businesses and leaving their lives in ruins — and then, turning a deaf ear to their pleas and offers and lawsuits, sold the properties for pennies on the dollar to shrewd investors who promptly resold them at profits of 300 percent."

Sounds like Pulitzer material — if it were true. Schneider and Brown were told, but neglected to report, that the FDIC does not and cannot call in loans or mortgages arbitrarily where borrowers are abiding by the terms of their loan agreement.

As an example of the relative rarity of foreclosure by the FDIC, as well as an example of how the reporters used emotional phraseology rather than statements grounded in fact, Schneider and Brown were advised that in New England the agency had held more than 130,000 loans over the last five years but foreclosed on just over 1 percent of them, generally in cases where the borrower was severely delinquent and unwilling to discuss a reasonable settlement.

This fact and others that put the foreclosure issue in its proper context were ignored. They were treated pretty much the same as other factual information Scripps Howard was given that didn't fit the reporters' preconception.

As for suggestions that the FDIC has sold assets for pennies on the dollar, here are the facts. In the four years covering 1990 through 1993, the FDIC sold 483,000 loans for \$8.2 billion (100.8 percent of the appraised value) and 34,812 real estate properties for \$5 billion (93 percent of the appraised value).

With respect to the many anecdotes presented by Schneider and Brown, some are true but the vast majority are not. And as

much as we would like to have responded to individuals quoted in the stories, we were not given a chance to do so. The FDIC repeatedly told the reporters that privacy laws prohibit the agency from discussing specific loans unless the borrower gives written authorization for the FDIC to comment or to release information about the loan. For whatever reason, no such authorization was granted to us so that we could respond to the charges. Simple fairness — to the FDIC and to readers of the series — would dictate that both sides of the story be presented. Even so, the reporters published their accusations of abuse without verification or equal treatment of the FDIC point of view.

Regrettably, the Scripps Howard series demonstrated an approach to news reporting that is based on preconceived story ideas fleshed out with anecdotal evidence. And the evidence that negates the reporters' basic premise was excluded. It is unfortunate that journalism has come to the point where this approach is not only accepted, but, in your case, honored.

**ALAN J. WHITNEY**  
DIRECTOR  
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS  
FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORP.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dan Thomasson, editor, Scripps Howard News Service, replies: *Mr. Whitney's*

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response to CJR's Laurel for Scripps Howard's investigative work on FDIC does not come as a surprise, as it is identical to the "Letter to the Editor" which the FDIC sent to newspapers throughout the country.

The short answer is that we proudly stand behind the work of Schneider and Brown. Those who have not seen the series should know that more than 680 people in twenty-two states were interviewed and more than 65,000 documents examined to produce the twelve stories. No unnamed sources were used.

If space allowed, we would be eager to refute each of Mr. Whitney's allegations. However, we cannot let pass his contention that FDIC was willing to provide information on specific cases. Mr. Whitney and his staff know well that Scripps Howard waited almost eight weeks for FDIC's legal department to draft a release. When that release was finally produced, the legalese used in the document, in fact, said the FDIC could not discuss any case that the agency was currently dealing with or had dealt with in the past. Moreover, we are still waiting for a revised release form and the response to 356 FOI's that we filed more than ten months ago.

As far as the accuracy of what Scripps Howard reported, we respectfully suggest that Mr. Whitney read the transcript of what his superiors at FDIC admitted to senators during congressional hearings in November prompted by the Scripps Howard series.

Senator William Cohen said staff of the Government Affairs Committee had confirmed the "abuses, incompetence, and mismanagement" that the news service had reported.

## WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

I am writing to correct an egregious error in Joe Holley's story on Dallas television station WFAA ("WFAA-TV: Bright Spot in the Lone Star State," CJR, January/February). Holley quotes WFAA executive news director John Miller as saying that WFAA and the *Detroit Free Press* "broke the story about problems with gas tanks on GM pickups built between 1972 and 1987."

To credit the *Free Press* with breaking this important national story is ludicrous. The *Detroit News*, in the person of Washington correspondent Bryan Gruley, published the country's first stories detailing alleged safety hazards with General Motors trucks in the summer of 1992.

Since then, the *News* has led coverage of the truck story with a series of award-winning exclusives that have been quoted by *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN, *USA Today*, and other major media outlets. Our competi-

tors at the *Free Press* haven't come close to matching our coverage, let alone beating it.

We're glad to credit WFAA in Dallas with a fine job of covering the truck story. But — joint operating agreement or not — it's unfair, inaccurate, and careless to credit the *Detroit Free Press* for the hard work and initiative of The *Detroit News*.

**JAMES P. GANNON**

WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF  
THE DETROIT NEWS

The editors reply: We regret the error.

## ASLEEP IN ELSINORE

In awarding a Laurel to the Scripps Howard News Service (January/February), you refer to "the wisdom of Polonius's financial advice to Hamlet." The prince, you'll remember, had other things on his mind; it was to his son, Laertes, that Polonius said, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

Act I, Scene II. You could look it up.

**ARTHUR SALM**  
SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

The editors reply: We should have.

## THE GAMBLING GAME

Re Stephen J. Simurda's "When Gambling Comes to Town: How to Cover a High-Stakes Story" (CJR January/February): this is advocacy, not reporting. Nowhere does Simurda include any fact that might jeopardize his thesis that "Gambling interests suck up everybody." He states that the National Council on Problem Gambling, which has industry executives on its board, does not oppose the spread of legalized gambling. But he fails to mention the council has discussed this issue and concluded that taking a stand against legal gambling would jeopardize its tax-exempt status.

Simurda besmirches Eugene Christiansen for working for the gambling industry, but leaves out Christiansen's work for the state of Connecticut and the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement. He dismisses William Eadington for "mak[ing] money off the industry, running training sessions for casino managers." But he conveniently forgets to mention that those sessions also train government regulators from throughout the world.

Simurda misstates my résumé to make it appear that I am proclaiming myself the leading authority on gambling law. He leaves out my being retained to advise the attorney general of New Jersey, the state of Texas, and the government of Canada on issues involving gambling law.

Simurda says that I don't "always volun-

teer .... to reporters" that I am working on Indian casinos in California. He, of course, does not give the names of any such reporters. Perhaps this is because I do include that information in every major article I write.

The biggest surprise was seeing Simurda picture me as a mouthpiece for legalized gambling. For the record, I am enclosing pages from the December 1993 Reno area newspapers about my being excluded from a Nevada tourism conference — because I was too critical of gaming industry.

In a way, it is nice to see such a misleading article written by a journalist. By comparison, it makes lawyers look good.

**I. NELSON ROSE**

PROFESSOR OF LAW  
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GAMING  
AND COMMERCIAL GAMING  
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA  
RENO, NEV.

Stephen J. Simurda replies: Sure, my story was a piece of advocacy. Specifically I was advocating thorough reporting and accurate balance in coverage of legalized gambling. Among other things, I advocated that reporters look beyond the grand promises of gambling promoters and the opinions of experts with direct financial connection to the industry. That still seems like a good idea.

As for Professor Rose's concerns, the thesis that "gambling interests suck up everybody" (which belonged to Vicki Abt of Penn State University, not me) has plenty of basis in fact. The examples I mentioned, and which Rose defends, reflect some of those people or groups that are straddling both sides of the legalized gambling debate — accepting money from gambling interests while trying to position themselves as independent observers, or critics, of the industry. My point was that reporters — and readers — need to know where a gambling source is coming from, just as they need to know whether a political consultant making a comment critical of a Republican candidate has worked as a Democratic party fundraiser.

As for Rose's concerns about his own portrayal, I am confused. At the bottom of the first page of his nine-page curriculum vitae are the words, "Recognized as the nation's leading authority on gambling and the law." The same words appear in the first sentence of his professional biography. I don't see the misstatement.

As for Rose's work to develop Indian casinos in Southern California, he did not volunteer this information to me, and tried to change the subject when I first brought it up. And while it's true he has mentioned it in



some of his past articles, it did not appear in the "major" article he had recently submitted to the Harvard Business Review, or any of the five other articles he included in a packet to me.

Rose told me during our interview that he saw the current boom in legalized gambling, and his involvement in casino development, as "a once-in-a-hundred-year opportunity," adding, "I guess I am taking advantage of it." I don't begrudge him his decision to seek a profit from gambling. But if he's betting that he can be a casino entrepreneur and still be viewed as an independent expert capable of objective analysis, I'm calling his bluff.

## A SHORT LEASH

Allison Liu Jernow's article on China's restricted press ("China: The Tight Leash Loosens," *CJR* January/February) should serve as a reminder to American journalists that we are fortunate to practice our trade in a free society. I'd like to share a few stories closer to home.

From my vantage point ten miles from the Mexican border, I see examples of co-opted journalism every day just across the Rio Grande. During a recent visit to Monterrey, a friend from a major daily pointed to a hand-woven basket filled with flowers and fruit. "A gift from the government," she muttered. "I hate that." She doesn't dare complain, though. It could jeopardize her position covering the state governor — and the government travel allowance that allows her and many others to follow the politicians they cover.

Another friend, who works in Texas for a Mexican news service, once told me he envies the latitude American journalists are given in choosing interview subjects. "I can't just quote anyone off the street," he said — only government officials and people affiliated with recognized organizations. The man on the street, apparently, is deemed too ignorant of the issues to comment intelligently.

Mexican wire reporters in small U.S. markets make roughly double the salary of the U.S. reporters around them, yet they long for the freedom to investigate, to cover both sides of a story, to criticize without fear of blacklists and even cattle prods (which, incidentally, were used on one of our reporters several years ago when he was caught covering a labor demonstration across the river). Although they live and write on U.S. soil, the leash reaches across the border.

**DAVE HARMON**  
REPORTER  
THE MONITOR  
McALLEN, TEX.

## TURN IT OFF

In response to your pair of articles in the November/December *CJR*, "Future Tense" and "Exploring the Interactive Future," I strongly encourage everyone who has become or is in danger of becoming enamored of interactive computer technology to read at least the first half of Jerry Mander's *In the Absence of the Sacred*.

Mander, whose previous book was titled *Four Arguments For the Elimination of Television*, makes the point that it is not the content of television and computer-derived information that is important, but the medium itself that poses a threat to the ability of human beings to absorb and understand information.

For journalists to think the salvation of our profession lies in interactive technology is as self-destructive as those who a decade ago believed that imitating television, a la *USA Today*, would be the salvation of newspapers.

Journalists, above all, should be skeptical of the claims of the technophiles who promote what is at heart "virtual reality" (an oxymoron to end all oxymorons) as an acceptable substitute for clear, simple, machine-free thinking.

**LISA AUG**  
NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y.

## J'ACCUSE

Dart: To the *Columbia Journalism Review*, that hallowed arbiter of professional integrity, for breaking a major commandment of journalism: before going to press, check the facts and contact the target. In this case, the target — of the Dart — was me.

What's really astonishing is that *CJR* didn't even bother to read a newspaper's investigative series before passing it off as "journalistic larceny," and a violation of the Eighth Commandment. You basically accused me of stealing from another reporter, *Newsday*'s Glenn Kessler, for a series that appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* last February.

I now accuse you of breaking the Ninth Commandment — thou shalt not bear false witness.

My stories documented instances of government inaction that allowed preventable transportation tragedies to recur. I wrote about people dying unnecessarily in trains, trucks, buses, cars, and, yes, airplanes. The fact that Kessler wrote about some of those airplanes, DC-9s, was not only noted in my series but stressed. "In June," I wrote, "a story in *New York Newsday* raised questions

about the DC-9 series 10's susceptibility to icing. The story was widely distributed at the aviation agency and the safety board — but the FAA again took no action."

*CJR* asserts I am "clearly indebted" to Kessler for my work. Yes, I'm indebted to him in the way any reporter is indebted to reporters who wrote on a related subject earlier. He certainly was an important point on my timeline — yet another call for remedies, followed by government inaction, followed by more death and injury.

But I'm more indebted to thousands of accident reports, court and computer records, internal government memoranda, investigative files, and other documents, and scores of people I spoke with over a ten-month period — bureaucrats, survivors, witnesses, pilots, truckers, engineers, and top officials.

**KEITH C. EPSTEIN**  
WASHINGTON BUREAU  
THE PLAIN DEALER

The editors reply: *Contrary to Mr. Epstein's assumption, the Dart was based on a close comparative reading of both his and Kessler's work. That reading suggested that, while not as extreme an example of borrowing as the others included in the collective Dart, Epstein's article owed more to Kessler's than he acknowledged. Indeed, the buried reference to Kessler's work, far from "stressing" his contribution, seemed to us to dismiss it. In any case, the Dart did indicate that we found Epstein's series "impressive" and that it was "indebted" to Kessler only in part.*

## CORRECTIONS

*CJR*'s keen-eyed editors managed to spell contributor Vincent Rodriguez's name correctly just once — in the byline to "The Myth of the Minority Reader" (*CJR*, January/February). On two other occasions, the "g" in Rodriguez became a "q." We apologize to Mr. Rodriguez.

A Lower case item in the January/February issue — in which the Rochester, New York, *Democrat and Chronicle* corrected the record about a certain man who could not, in fact, "simultaneously whistle, stand on his head, and drink beer" — carried an erroneous date. The correct date was October 17, 1990.

*To be considered for publication in the May/June issue, letters should be received by March 23. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.*



# CHRONICLE

## RISE OF THE PENIS Fall of Inhibitions?

Someday soon an earnest graduate student will sit down and write a doctoral thesis titled "The Rise of the Penis in American Journalism." Ever since June 23, when Lorena Bobbitt tossed her hapless husband's manhood onto the lawn of the Paty-Kake Daycare Center in Manassas, Virginia, journalists have been falling over each other to be more explicit about the male sexual apparatus. Bland euphemisms like "member"

and "organ" quickly got lost in the shuffle. A computer search of the first half of 1993 revealed only a paltry twenty articles mentioning penises. But after the Bobbitt case surfaced, the P word popped up in more than 1,000 stories.

By the time the Michael Jackson scandal broke in August, and his supposedly speckled penis became the focus of international scrutiny, there seemed to be no limits on genital reportage. Journalistically speaking, the penis has arrived.

Nor does it show any sign of withdrawing soon. On January 21, The Associated Press, in its usual understated style, reported that Cynthia Mason

Gillett, a twenty-eight-year-old resident of Canton, North Carolina, had been placed on probation for dousing her husband's penis with nail polish remover and setting him on fire. The report, which came on the heels of an AP story about a California woman accused of cutting off her husband's testicles, drew gasps as it quickly ricocheted on e-mail among reporters who thought they had seen everything.

That the AP, which broke the Bobbitt story nationally, has turned into a clearinghouse for sexually explicit stories has not escaped the notice of management. "We had a run of penises on the wire, didn't we?" says AP managing editor Darrell Christian with a chuckle. "The

## CARROT ENVY?

What is it on the Sunday magazine cover below that the Goldsboro, North Carolina, *News-Argus* considered "grossly" obscene? "So obscene, in fact, we would not feel comfortable in describing it," wrote Gene Price in his November 15 front-page column. Four other papers — the Bluefield, West Virginia, *Daily Telegraph*; the Cumberland, Maryland, *Times-News*; the Dalton, Georgia, *Daily Citizen-News*; and the Griffin, Georgia, *Daily News* — also declined to distribute the November 12-14 edition of *USA Weekend* because of this object. Hint #1: It's a fruit or vegetable.

Hint #2: It helps, as the Raleigh, North Carolina, *News & Observer* put it, to "stare long enough and think like a giggly fifth-grader." No, it's not the naked banana, not that nice round pair of oranges. Stop that. It's the

peniform carrot.

Reader opinion was strongly divided on the carrot controversy. "I don't need to know what was on the cover, only that you had the foresight to know what is and isn't good taste in our area. Thank God some people who have the ability to make a difference are brave enough to do so," wrote Catherine L. Duncan to the *Cumberland Times-News*. "Censorship is one thing — upholding family values is another. Hal-

lelujah!" wrote Judy Spivey to the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*.

Among readers on the other side of the debate at the *Times-News* was J.A. Wilson: "This is still the United States of America! And your act of blatant censorship is not only 'offensive and distasteful,' it's also pretty damned insulting!" Wilson noted that he finds the work of syndicated columnist Cal Thomas "offensive and distasteful," and that the solution is to avert his eyes. In the same paper, William B. Stemple added: "After watching the evening news on television and reading the sensational details of the Bobbitt trials in your newspaper, I am at a loss to imagine what could be so offensive on the cover of *USA Weekend*."

*USA Today* officials note that a sixth paper, the Plano, Texas, *Star Courier*, took issue with the offending vegetable, but in the end its editors decided a carrot was a carrot and distributed the magazine. The paper received no complaints.

Mike Hoyt

Hoyt is *CJR's* associate editor.





stories existed before, but they didn't get to our level." (Making up for lost time, the AP took up its new beat with gusto. During Lorena Bobbitt's trial, it transmitted photos of her husband's severed penis. There were no takers.)

Howard Stern, the self-proclaimed "King of All Media," was positively giddy at the spectacle of better-behaved broadcasters like Katie Couric and Barbara Walters intoning the word "penis," which he regards as his trademark property.

Headline writers frolicked like slap-happy urologists. "Phallus Interruptus," joked *The Nation*. "Sex, Lies, and an 8-inch Carving Knife," announced *Vanity Fair*. (The knife expanded or contracted in length, depending on the publication.) BOBBITT CASE? AW, PUT A ZIPPER ON IT, urged *The Washington Post*. Many headlines seemed designed to jangle male nerves: SEPARATION ANXIETY (*Men's Health*); SEVERANCE PAY (*People*); SLICE OF WIFE (*The Washington Post*).

At *Time* and *Newsweek*, feminists were trotted out to survey this latest

## SOUND BITE

"Yeah, we're taking some inexperienced people, at lower pay, and throwing them into the breach. This is the world after the Guild."

New York Post managing editor Marc Kalech, in a New York Observer piece about the decline of the Post under Rupert Murdoch, who broke *The Newspaper Guild* there.

skirmish in America's gender wars. While some men might have expected — or feared — a more gleeful tone, both women were rather affectionate toward the male appendage. Columnist Barbara Ehrenreich opined in *Time*, "I admire the male body and prefer to find the penis attached to it rather than having to root around in vacant lots with Ziploc bag in hand." Across town, Cyn-

thia Heimel told *Newsweek* readers, "Some women find a penis distasteful, others can take penises or leave them, but many of us find penises rather vulnerable and endearing. It's the rest of men that scares us."

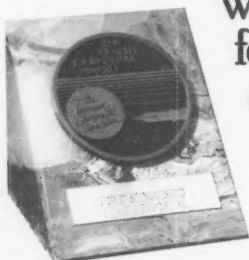
The legacy of the Bobbitt case is likely to be a reduction in the gap between what journalists talk about in the office and what they pass along to the public. (For a glimpse of true-to-life Newsroomspeak, check out *Thé Paper*, an upcoming film about a Manhattan tabloid. Michael Keaton, who plays the editor of the *New York Sun*, complains about the illustration for a series on penile implants: "Can we get a better dick drawing next time? This one looks like a map of Florida.")

It remains to be seen how far journalists will take the new Peter Principle. After all, give them an inch...

Andrea Sachs

Sachs covers legal issues for *Time*.

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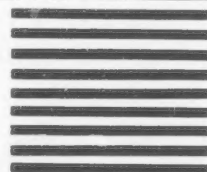
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# MIAMI MURDER MYSTERY

## How Three Haitian Radio Hosts Were Silenced

Fritz Dor, Jean-Claude Olivier, and Dona St. Plite were radio personalities in Miami's Little Haiti who had much in common: all three were Haitian-born; all promoted the political views of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on their political talk shows; and now, all three have been murdered.

In Miami, as in Haiti, radio is a lifeline to the Haitian community, supplying news about the homeland, commentary, gossip, and space for political debate. Dor, Olivier, and St. Plite read news and frequently expressed opinions on air that in Haiti could have gotten them killed: they lashed out at the Haitian military that overthrew Aristide; they identified and denounced Miami residents who support the military. Calls poured in, pro and con, including a few death threats.

None of the three took the threats very seriously. After all, they were not in Haiti. (Five journalists have been killed there since Aristide was ousted in a bloody coup three years ago.) In February 1991, Olivier, a calypso band promoter when he was not on the air, was gunned down outside a popular Haitian nightspot where one of his bands was playing. The hit man walked up to him and fired point blank. Twenty-five days later, the same gun was used to shoot Fritz Dor as he walked to his car from his office. Last October, St. Plite was killed outside the school grounds where a concert to benefit the widow and children of Fritz Dor was taking place.

Police have accused two men of taking part in the Olivier and Dor murders, although the trigger men have not been arrested. Authorities indicted Francky St. Louis Joseph as one of the assassins in the St. Plite case on January 26.

While he concedes that "they were



**Dona St. Plite was the third politically outspoken Haitian talk show host to be murdered in the U.S.**

killed because of their radio work," John Kastrenakes, an assistant state attorney who is prosecuting the Olivier and Dor murders, says he is confident that those murders do not involve the politics of Haiti itself. Law enforcement sources say all three murders point to internal business disputes in Little Haiti.

In both Haiti and Little Haiti, hosts of Haitian political news and talk shows do not make their living from radio. While Olivier promoted his bands, Dor ran an immigration services office and St. Plite ran a driving school. There are rumors that they may have been involved in illegal activities. In Little Haiti, meanwhile, many feel that the police fail to appreciate how entangled are business and politics in their community. The murders, says Roger Biamby, who runs the Pierre Toussaint Haitian Catholic Center in Little Haiti, were clearly intended to send a signal — a political signal.

The Olivier and Dor murders, it is worth noting, took place during a time of significant turmoil in Haiti, shortly after Aristide took office — to the dismay of the Haitian military and ruling class, and their many supporters in Little Haiti. By the time St. Plite was killed, well after Aristide's ouster, the political situation in Haiti had completely deteriorated. Scores of Aristide supporters were being murdered and persecuted. In the U.S., in Haitian communities in places like Boston, New York, and Miami, death lists were circulating. St. Plite's name appeared on one such

list that circulated just days before his death. "Long Live the Army," said the note, hand-scribbled in Creole. "These people must be shot before or on October 30th." October 30 was the original deadline, set by the U.N., for the return to power of Aristide. St. Plite was killed on October 24.

Haitian dissidents in the United States have always suspected that their activities are monitored by the Haitian military. Serge Simon, a radio journalist who fled Haiti in 1992 and now lives in Boston, says the three Miami murders will make Haitian radio in the U.S. more cautious. "The murders did what they were meant to do — intimidate pro-Aristide supporters in the United States," he says.

In Haiti, Simon was kidnapped and beaten by the military for airing a report on military corruption. For him, the pattern in the U.S. is becoming uncomfortably familiar: death lists circulate; opposition members get killed; radio programs are muzzled. "We expected something different in the U.S.," he says.

*Ana Arana and Kim Brice*

*Arana, a journalist who has covered Latin America, is the coordinator for the Americas at The Committee to Protect Journalists. Brice, a former member of the U.N.'s human rights mission in Haiti, is the committee's research consultant on Haiti.*

## HOW NOW DOW JONES? Dubious Reporting On Why the Market Moves

Monday, December 13, was a good day at the New York Stock Exchange. The Dow Jones Industrial Average picked up nearly twenty-four points, sailing into record territory. Reuters' daily business report, in its lead paragraph, offered the following reason: "Growing optimism about America's increasing economic strength lifted blue-chip stocks to a record high."



Unfortunately, the next day, Tuesday, December 14, the Dow lost almost twenty-two points — about the same amount it had gained on Monday's supposed tide of economic optimism. Now Reuters explained the sizable dip with a reference to "profit-taking." Had Tuesday's greed really eclipsed Monday's enthusiasm?

The answer, most likely, is no. "The truth is the market is such a vast place no one knows for sure why it rises and falls," says John Dorfman, a staff writer at *The Wall Street Journal* who watches the market closely.

Richard Sylla, a professor of economics at New York University who studies the history of financial institutions and markets, says the reasons cited for the day-to-day movement of the Dow are generally after-the-fact-rationalizations. "Most of us," Sylla adds, "think the short-term fluctuations of the market — from hour-to-hour, minute-to-minute — are basically random."

"It's impossible to know why the stock market rose or fell fifteen points when there's no news, no obvious news," concedes Rick Gladstone, deputy business editor at The Associated Press in New York. "It may have nothing to do with the news or with anything. But," he adds, "we are obliged to say what might've been at work. When I read stories that don't offer any explanations, I get very frustrated."

On December 14, when the Dow lost almost twenty-two points, the AP had three suspects in its lead, one of which was "concern about the political events in Russia."

But if apprehension over the strong showing of ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in the Russian elections

## SOUND BITE

"Go to where the silence is and say something."

Amy Goodman of WBAI/Pacific Radio, as she and co-producer Allan Nairn accepted an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Silver Baton award in January for their coverage of the 1991 massacre of Timorese by Indonesian troops.

played a significant role that day, you wouldn't have known it from visiting Wall Street. Asked if Russian political instability was affecting her day, Melissa Martin, a New York Stock Exchange floor-trader, replied, "The way we trade down on the stock exchange floor, we're probably not looking as long-range as that. We're looking in more of a short term."

Nearby, at Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Securities Corp., managing director Brad Weekes, also thought the events in Russia were of peripheral concern. He said, "The market reacts to news that nobody knows about, when all of a sudden it's a major surprise." Weekes thought that the Russian political situation had been volatile for some time and that the latest development would not have a major impact on the market.

The actual reporting for a daily market piece generally consists of a series of phone calls to analysts, who offer

their opinion as to why the market is doing what it is doing. Greg Crawford, a Reuters business correspondent, says that sufficient scrutiny will usually yield the right reason. "More often than not there are days you can pinpoint the factors," he says. The AP's Gladstone says that analysis, along with some "informed speculation" on the reporter's part, and some simplification ("due to deadline pressures") make up the elements of the day's market coverage.

Of course, without those elements, the business report would be little more than a collection of numbers. That prospect leads the *Journal's* John Dorfman to conclude that the risks of facile reporting are outweighed by the alternative — offering no explanation. Numbers alone are not enough, he says. "There's an instinctive hunger to know why."

Trevor Nelson

Nelson is a producer for Monitor Radio in Boston.

## BORDER CONFLICT

### Free-lance Reporters and "Appearances"

Just as cultural and political boundaries often blur along the Texas-Mexico border, so do the ethical guidelines followed by some border journalists. A handful of Texas newspaper reporters who cover the most important beats on the border — business and the environment — have been free-lancing on the same subjects for El Paso-based magazines that serve as mouthpieces for the foreign-owned factories along the Mexican side of the border.

This conflict of interest has reinforced the belief of some Texas environmentalists and labor activists that news organizations along the Texas border are generally reluctant to investigate the record of health and safety violations of those *maquiladoras*. "These papers don't seem to understand the role of the press," says Rose Farmer, the





## "Common sense would tell a good reporter to never get into that kind of relationship"

manager of an Audubon preserve outside Brownsville, Texas. "They seem to think they're an arm of the chamber of commerce. It's always a paper from Houston, Dallas, or San Antonio that's breaking stories down here."

When confronted about their free-lancing, the border reporters — and one editor — say they see no ethical conflict. Other Texas journalists disagree. "It's not even a gray area," says *Houston Chronicle* projects editor Don Mason. "Common sense would tell a good reporter to never get into that kind of relationship," offers David House, managing editor of the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*. "Without our credibility we have nothing."

The story is a familiar one: underpaid reporters, often with no guidance from peers or editors on ethical issues, making an extra few hundred dollars spinning stories off their newspaper beats. Because they believe their stories to be "fair and objective," they see no conflict.

"I'm not writing editorials for them," says *Brownsville Herald* environmental reporter Hector Garza-Trejo, in defense of his writing for *Twin Plant News*, a slick El Paso monthly that calls itself "the magazine of the maquiladora industry since 1985." (As this article was going to press, Garza-Trejo left the paper to work for a local law firm.)

Meanwhile, *Herald* business reporter Tony Vindell has written articles and taken photos for the bi-monthly *Maquila: Voice of Free Trade*, which once listed him on its masthead as a contributing writer. "I don't see the conflict," says Vindell, who describes his free-lance pieces as "feature stories" about the *maquiladoras*. "They're not very controversial."

No argument there. A typical Vindell article might quote an AT&T executive saying NAFTA is a "win-win between the United States and Mexico" and fea-

ture Vindell's own photos taken inside several *maquilas* — a level of access often denied to the mainstream business press.

Neither *Twin Plant News* nor *Maquila* is likely to print any exposé that names specific companies. *Twin Plant News* publisher Don Nibbe concedes as much. "I probably wouldn't [run an exposé]," says the former *maquila* manager-turned-editor. "For me to stay in good with these companies [they need] to stay out of the limelight." *Maquila* magazine publisher Joanne Gwinn Burt says she wouldn't hesitate to print an unflattering piece about industry, but then asks, "What would be the point? It would be of fleeting interest to our readers. Besides, ninety-nine percent of the *maquilas* are environmentally correct."

A third free-lancing journalist, environmental reporter Luis Miguel Negron of the *El Paso Times*, who has written twice for *Twin Plant News*, also initially defended his actions, but after some thought had a change of heart. "I don't think I'll be doing that anymore," says Negron, twenty-seven. "It doesn't matter if you get paid twenty-five cents or thousands . . . There are appearances." The *Times*'s editor and publisher, Don Flores, says he had been unaware of Negron's free-lancing — which he says is against the paper's policy — until informed about it by Negron shortly after *CJR* called.

Less bothered by appearances is *Brownsville Herald* managing editor Lavice Laney, who says she sees no conflict of interest in what her reporters have done as long as they do "an unbiased reporting job for us."

But to some potential news sources, those appearances matter. Rose Farmer, the Audubon preserve manager, says that when she learns of an important tip about industrial pollution she doesn't call the *Herald*: "I just don't trust some of the *Herald*'s reporters. When I have a good story that needs an investigative reporter I call their competition — the *McAllen Monitor*."

Bruce Selcraig Selcraig, a former Senate investigator and Texas newspaper reporter, is an Austin-based writer who often reports on environmental issues and corporate crime.

## THE DAILY EMERGENCY

### An Albanian Paper Under Serbian Rule

In more peaceful times, *Bujku* (Farm Worker) was about what its name suggests — farming. It was a monthly in Yugoslavia's Kosovo Province in southern Serbia, on the Albanian border. Kosovo has a population that is 90 percent Albanian, and in those days *Bujku* ran Albanian-language stories about crop harvests and farm machinery.

Today, *Bujku* is a daily political journal, covering such things as police brutality and underground schools and chronicling Kosovo's struggle for independence from the Serbs. One of the last surviving Albanian-language publications in the province, it is hanging on by a thread.

*Bujku*'s transformation came in response to the Serb-imposed "state of emergency" in Kosovo. In July 1990, nearly a year before Croatia and Slovenia broke from the Yugoslav federation, Kosovo's parliament declared independence from Serbia. In response, Serb authorities abolished the Kosovo parliament and introduced apartheid-like restrictions. Albanian schools were closed, Albanian workers were dismissed en masse from their jobs, and Albanian villages were attacked in police raids.

In addition, Kosovo's Albanian-language daily, *Rilindja* (Renaissance), was banned for allegedly inciting the independence movement. In response, journalists transformed *Bujku* into a daily. However, the authorities soon found a new way to subdue Kosovo's press. In December 1992, the Serbian state took over management of *Rilindja* Publishing House, publishers of all Albanian-language papers and magazines in Kosovo. They renamed it *Panorama* and began charging astronomical rents. The Albanians tried to resist, but finally gave in and paid the rent. The resulting financial squeeze forced all the publications but *Bujku* to shut down. (Recently, however, with the help of the Soros Foundation, two



## FELLOWSHIPS IN GERMANY

Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism is again seeking applicants for travel fellowships for American journalists.

The John J. McCloy Fellowships, sponsored by the American Council on Germany, offer programs for American journalists wishing to study and write about Germany. They cover expenses for a three-week trip at any time during the year. Deadline for submitting applications: April 1, 1994.

Applications, including résumé and a description of what use is intended of the fellowship, should be sent to:

Robert Petretti  
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## Director of Media Program in RUSSIA

**T**he Russian-American Press and Information Center seeks applications for the position of American Co-Director to head its comprehensive media assistance program. Located in Moscow and with a network of regional programs, the Center aids the Russian media through technical and management assistance, seminars and training, electronic database resources, and other services and programs.

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political weeklies were resurrected.)

The authorities do not censor *Bujku* but, through Panorama, wield absolute control over printing and distribution. Only 10,000 copies are printed daily, compared with *Rilindja's* former daily circulation of 120,000. Meanwhile, editors and reporters say they have been subjected to interrogation, arrest, and worse. In May 1992, reporter Behar Zogiani led three other *Bujku* staffers to the village of Leshan to investigate an incident that left a young Albanian man and a Serb policeman dead. On the second day of the *Bujku* team's visit, Zogiani says, police stopped the reporters' car and forced Zogiani to read out loud the story he had filed the previous day. Then they were taken to a police station, he says, and beaten for more than an hour.

After a beating, "they told us, 'You can write about how the police are beating the Albanians.'"

"They told us, 'You can write about how the police are beating the Albanians,'" recalls Zogiani, who was bedridden for two weeks afterward.

Why does the Serb government allow *Bujku* to exist at all? Some Albanians, including *Bujku* reporter Evliana Berani, say that the Serbs are preserving the paper so they can claim that the Albanians have their own free press.

Editor-in-chief Ruzhdi Demiri, however, argues that *Bujku* is tolerated, despite its challenges to Serb authority, because it is "committed to a peaceful solution in Kosovo." Without the newspaper, he says, the Albanian independence movement could grow more extremist. The Serbs, Demiri suggests, want to avoid the potential result — a war in Kosovo that might well spread, compounding the chaos in the Balkans.

Chris Springer

Springer is a copy editor and free-lance writer from California who lives in Budapest.

## THE ACTIVIST A Paper that Really Gets Involved

As military base closures and defense department cutbacks loomed in early 1993, community leaders in Kitsap County in Washington knew the time had come to act. For years they had talked about their economy's overdependence on Navy spending — the area has three large military installations and scores of defense department contractors — but they had done little to pursue economic diversification.

Among those leaders was *The Sun*, a 40,000-circulation, Scripps Howard daily in Bremerton, and a newspaper where the buzzwords "community involvement" mean more than reader advisory boards, focus groups, and the like. Editor Mike Phillips, along with *The Sun's* general manager and its advertising director, helped plan an economic diversification summit, at which some 250 business people, educators, and labor leaders joined high school students and retirees to discuss their community's future. And *The Sun* contributed more than its managers. Before the summit, reporter Gina Binole researched and wrote a multipart series on five other communities' efforts to diversify their economies. She traveled from Spokane to Norfolk, Virginia, to find out what had worked and what had not.

Reaction to *The Sun's* unusual involvement in community affairs was generally positive. "I think the activist newspaper — and, yes, I consider *The Sun* a community activist newspaper — creates a different political climate by the intelligence it brings to an issue," says Warren Olson, a summit organizer and former schools administrator and chamber of commerce president. "A better-informed population makes better decisions."

Jerry Reid, who owns real estate business in the county and has been active in community projects for decades, says he found *The Sun's* role refreshing: "I guess that I'd never thought that a news-



paper had — I won't say a duty — a possibility of playing 'what if?' or throwing out ideas."

The economic summit seemed to give the Kitsap County Economic Development Council a shot in the arm. It applied for and won a \$100,000 federal defense conversion planning grant, becoming one of seven counties in the nation to win such a grant, and picked up another \$50,000 in state matching funds. Part of the money will subsidize a new "business incubators" program, which was first envisioned at the summit.

Earlier, however, on another civic issue — a campaign to build a larger fund for the county to purchase and protect open spaces — *The Sun's* role was less universally praised. In 1991, after citizens successfully blocked plans to develop a much-beloved forest, Phillips wrote an editorial entreating readers to push local government to "think big" about open space. The editorial set off a campaign, which the newspaper helped organize: citizens attending some fifty meetings throughout the county were invited to design an open-space preservation plan. At the meetings, Phillips himself presented a slide show with examples of open spaces that might be preserved. *The Sun* later published a special report on the citizens' preservation plan.

Largely because the plan became a bond issue (later defeated), some people in *The Sun's* newsroom felt that their paper had gone beyond its educational role and stepped into the political arena. (They did not want to be quoted for this article.)

Since Phillips became editor in 1989 he has urged people in the newsroom to



**Sun editor Mike Phillips wants his paper to help shape its community**

become involved in the community, although he acknowledges that such activity sometimes forces journalists to walk a very fine line. As a guideline, he suggests that his journalists avoid partisan politics, refuse to work as publicists for any group, and decline to serve in organizations that spend tax dollars or make public

policy.

"People in the community look to *The Sun* to provide leadership both on and off the printed page — to come out of the newsroom into the community and help resolve differences and make decisions," Phillips says. "They don't want us to

tell them what to do. They just want us to help."

Barbara Zang

*Zang, a doctoral student at Indiana University, is doing her dissertation on The Sun.*

## FOLLOW-UP

# DATABASE DOLLARS

The National Writers Union, by helping writers to file a copyright infringement lawsuit, is erecting a warning sign on the electronic information highway. The union's intent is not to halt traffic, but to get the writers it represents a share of the tolls (see "Database Dollars: Whose Are They?" *CJR*, September/October 1992).

The suit was filed in December by ten free-lance writers against The New York Times Company; Times Mirror's Newsday, Inc.; Time-Warner's Time Inc. Magazine Company; Mead Data Central Corp., which owns the Nexis electronic database; and University Microfilms International, a publisher of CD-ROM disks. Each of the writers had stories published by a magazine or newspaper that were later uploaded onto online networks or databases or published on a CD-ROM without the writer's permission.

The 4,000-member union, an affiliate of the United Auto Workers, contends that, under copyright law, written permission is necessary. The suit seeks payment for the stories and an injunction. Union members hope the case results in a legal precedent making it possible for writers to get a share of the rapidly expanding profits from electronic reproduction of their work. The Writers Guild of America East and West and Washington Independent Writers are helping to fund the lawsuit.

Judith Broadhurst

*Broadhurst is editor and publisher of a newsletter, Freelance Success, and the founding sysop, or system operator, of the free-lancers section of the Journalism Forum on CompuServe.*

## SOUND BITE

"We in journalism, print and broadcast alike, seldom cover anything but the horror and the failures, fostering in our readers and viewers the conviction that there is no hope — no point in even trying to fix any of the things that are so terribly wrong in our country, or even improve them a little."

*Eileen Shanahan, Washington bureau chief for The St. Petersburg Times, in her November Elijah Parish Lovejoy lecture at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where she received an honorary degree.*



## CAPITAL LETTER

# How To HANDLE DIRTY STORIES (AND STILL FEEL CLEAN)

BY CHRISTOPHER HANSON

One of the more memorable characters I have come across lately is Clint Murtaugh in Robert R. McCammon's 1992 gothic novel, *Gone South*. Clint is a pale, delicate, undersized creature. He has the added misfortune of being an appendage: he protrudes from the chest of his brother Flint, a large, brutish bounty hunter (who wears loose shirts to conceal Clint when he is out on a case). When Flint blunders into trouble, Clint is in trouble, too. If Flint were to tie one on, Clint would share the hang-over.

Many of the most serious reporters in the national press corps remind me a bit of Clint, at least when it comes to dealing with the private conduct of political figures. They have serious qualms about disclosing the sexual transgressions of others, and would prefer not to do so unless the misbehavior somehow affects the politician's performance in office. But, as the coverage of Gary Hart-Donna Rice in 1987 and Bill Clinton-Gennifer Flowers in 1992 demonstrates, such misgivings count for little. The Flint Murtaughs of the media spread the allegations anyway, dragging the Clintons into the story against their will.

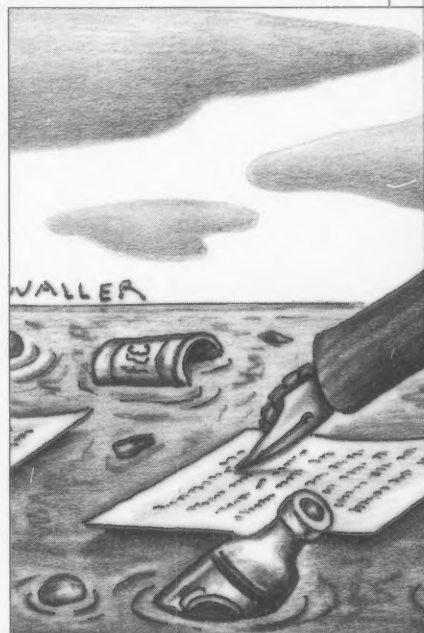
*Christopher Hanson is Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and a contributing editor to CJR.*

The way in which the most recent Clinton allegations came to be aired was a sign that, with each successive sex story, it becomes easier to maneuver serious reporters into covering what many doubt is a legitimate story. Cliff Jackson, the Arkansas lawyer and former Oxford classmate of the president's who is now an anti-Clinton crusader, became an adviser to the state troopers who had guarded the then governor and who alleged that he had used them to set up trysts. After the troopers' story broke, Jackson said that his aim all along was to get their tale published in the respected *Los Angeles Times*. He made the troopers available to reporters from that paper, who spent weeks investigating their sundry charges.

At the same time, he helped arrange for conservative David Brock of *The American Spectator* to conduct his own interviews and prepare a titillating, 11,000-word exposé. It was cloaked as a scholarly account, with pedantic prose and footnotes, but it blithely intermingled fact, rumor, and conjecture about the sex lives of Clinton and his wife. (Brock — who earlier published a controversial book attacking Anita Hill — was particularly vicious about Hillary Rodham Clinton, depicting her as a foul-mouthed harpy who degraded the American flag, cursed underprivileged children, and, most horrifying of all, dispatched state troopers to fetch her tampons.)

In the weeks before Brock's piece appeared, the *Los Angeles Times* reporters kept digging away, seeking corroboration for the troopers' claims.

Pressure to air the story began to mount. After the *Spectator* arranged to publish its article on December 20, Jackson, who had become impatient, made sure the *Los Angeles Times* knew it was in danger of being scooped. Meanwhile, bootlegged advance copies of the *Spectator* were circulating around Washington to other news organizations, and *Times* editors were aware of this. *The New Republic's* Fred Barnes, who is on the *Spectator* editorial board, said on the Friday December 17 *McLaughlin Group* that a major magazine was about to uncork a big one about Clinton's alleged transgressions and abuses of power, but predicted that a newspaper that had the story might



decline to print it. CNN went after the story. On the same day, ABC White House correspondent Brit Hume, an occasional contributor to *The American Spectator*, faxed the Brock article to ABC executives, arguing that it was a legitimate story for the network because it involved allegations that Clinton had used officers paid by tax money for private purposes.

On Sunday, December 19, the dam finally broke. Jackson — increasingly concerned that the *Los Angeles Times* might spike the story — authorized CNN to air an interview with the troopers that it had taped the day before on an embargoed basis. Jackson explained later to *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz that "we needed the national TV hammer." Despite some internal disagreement, CNN decided to air the allegations. CNN vice-president Ed Turner told Kurtz: "The fact the troopers were willing to go on camera was what made us decide to do a story .... You never know if something is altogether truthful."

After the charges aired on CNN, The Associated Press filed a piece based on the broadcast, which was widely reprinted, and ABC and NBC aired the allegations. (CBS held back, citing insufficient corroboration of the troopers' claims).

On Monday, December 20, *Los*





*Los Angeles Times* editor Shelby Coffey was still holding off, saying his paper's piece was not ready. It finally ran the next day.

*Los Angeles Times* national editor Norman Miller says the paper "made a deliberate decision to ignore competitive factors .... We did not want to be stampeded." Part of the reason for the delay in publication was that White House officials did not agree to be interviewed about the matter until late Sunday, Miller says.

Even if the *Times* hadn't been stampeded, it seems clear that Jackson, by giving the green light to CNN, had a major impact on how and when the story reached most of the audience.

The moves, and countermoves, of those promoting the story, and those who were critical of it, produced intense suspicions and bitter feelings even before anything was aired. Jackson, for instance, says he was convinced he was under surveillance and he and the troopers were fearful of being silenced in some way by the pro-Clinton forces. Jackson says he consequently approached Bob Dornan, the Republican representative from California who occasionally substitutes as host on the Rush Limbaugh radio call-in show, swore him to secrecy, and played him a tape of the troopers making their allegations. Dornan was "our insurance poli-

cy," Jackson explains: Dornan would tell their tale if something happened to them. Jackson notes that, while Brock was preparing the *Spectator* piece, the magazine's offices were broken into three times and files were rifled. (Christopher Caldwell, assistant managing editor of the *Spectator*, confirms that there were break-ins on September 3 and September 10 in the magazine's Arlington, Virginia, offices and on September 22 in its New York office. What was odd, Caldwell says, was that there had never been a break-in before in the twenty-six year history of the magazine, that files appeared to have been searched, and that police said it was unusual that neither costly computer equipment nor money in desks had been stolen. On the other hand, some valuables were taken — a cassette player, radio, fax machine, VCR, etc. "We are not pushing this as a break-in directed at our investigation," Caldwell says.)

On the other side of the spectrum, Jack Nelson, Washington bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times*, complained on *Washington Week In Review* (December 24) that "there was a conspiracy, in my opinion, by right-wingers, including some right-wing journalists, to press this newspaper into running the story before it was ready to." He singled out ABC's Hume and *The New Republic's* Barnes. Hume

retorted, in an interview with *CJR*, that talk of conspiracy was "a little nutty ... a little extreme," and quipped that Nelson and Bobby Ray Inman (the erstwhile Defense Secretary nominee who withdrew, saying he was the victim of a plot by columnists to bring him down) may have been "seeing the same therapist." He also said Nelson reminded him of Captain Queeg of *The Caine Mutiny* carrying on about stolen strawberries.

Nelson also charges that Hume was spreading a rumor that Nelson had threatened to resign if the sex piece ran in his newspaper. Nelson denies ever threatening to resign and says, "For Hume to be ... spreading a lie about me is despicable." Hume says he did not try to spread the rumor, which was all over town, but attempted to verify it. He adds that he is puzzled as to why Nelson got so upset, because a rumor about acting on principle is not derogatory.

As the various accounts spewed out, there came the familiar intramedia debate as to their legitimacy. *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis noted that "not one woman was produced in support of the charges" and denounced the coverage as a surrender to sensationalism. *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen attacked the idea that adultery, even if proven, is a key to overall character. He pointed out that Oskar Schindler, who risked his life and spent his fortune to save more than 1,000 Jews from Nazi gas chambers, was a frenetic womanizer, and concluded: "His personal morality gave not a hint that at his core was a block of granite-like morality." *Newsday* columnist Lars-Erik Nelson argued that the allegations of womanizing were stale and added: "Virtually everything the troopers say is unprovable, and much of it defies belief. They quote Clinton, for example, as admitting that 'he never met a tax he didn't like.' This is as plausible as my telling you that George Bush woke up every morning and asked himself, 'How can I be clueless again today?'"

These critics, representing the higher standards of yore and the views of many serious journalists today, make persuasive points. But, needless to say, they have little discernible impact on the practice of journalism. This is because they represent a rational approach in a



profession that has come to be dominated by bread and circuses. They ride like Clint on the chest of the beast. In a sense, their situation is worse than Clint's: he was born to his predicament, while many of them can remember a time when they had more control. In the 1960s, after all, just a few dozen national reporters could define what is news, and they were able to decide that JFK's sexual adventures (an open secret) did not qualify.

Today, unfortunately, the rationalists have lost the power to set standards of relevancy. As *Los Angeles Times* media correspondent Tom Rosenstiel pointed out in his book *Strange Bedfellows*, the advent of CNN, the growth of talk radio, the proliferation of new cable outlets and independent TV stations, and the increasingly blurred lines between news and entertainment have changed the shape of the news machine and the notion of what news is.

For higher-minded news organizations wishing to maintain their standards, the choices are limited. Ignoring a story they do not deem relevant is an option, in theory, but difficult in practice. Initially, *The New York Times* kept the trooper story at arm's length. When *Times* Washington bureau chief R.W. Apple was asked why his paper was downplaying it (the *Times* had run only a short wire piece on December 21), he replied that the *Times* was not a supermarket tabloid. But the next day his paper ran a front-page piece on the sex allegations. Hillary Rodham Clinton had denounced the charges, forcing the newspaper of record to serve up a certain amount of tabloid fare in order to explain her comments.

A second option is to downplay the more sensationalistic elements in a private-conduct story and play up the issues that seem most relevant to public policy. *The Washington Post* took this approach on December 21, stressing a statement from a White House official that Clinton tried to block publication of the allegations and highlighting charges that Clinton was misusing taxpayer-funded police bodyguards for recreational purposes. Other, more titillating allegations got short shrift. The paper wrote blandly that "the two troopers ... make allegations about a strained relationship between Clinton and his wife, including accounts of extensive vulgarity."

## For news organizations wishing to maintain their standards, the choices are limited

One drawback to such an approach is that it can drive members of the audience into the arms of competitors. One reader recalls how the *Post*'s reference to "vulgarity" piqued his curiosity. He went out immediately and bought a newspaper that was certain to have reported any vulgarities about Clinton that were available — the *Post*'s hard-right rival, *The Washington Times*. The *Washington Times* article provided many graphic details from the Brock account, focusing heavily on allegations about oral sex. But it left some incidents out for lack of space. So our reader felt compelled to track down a copy of the *Spectator* itself. He closely read the most graphic passages — e.g., one in which Clinton is alleged to have said that one woman "could suck a tennis ball through a garden hose." Then he reread certain of these passages. Only then was he ready to declare the piece to be irrelevant trash. This reader prefers not to be identified, but probably should be: it's me.

Rosenstiel is among those who advocate a sensible alternative to ignoring private-conduct stories or covering only those story elements that pertain to performance in office. He argues that serious news organizations should jump in and cover such stories first, before the sensationalists get to them; they should try to impose strong standards of accuracy, while letting the audience decide what is relevant.

The *Los Angeles Times* evidently was trying to take this approach in its own account of the troopers' allegations. It was on the story first. Its reporters — William Rempel and Douglas Frantz — interviewed the troopers extensively and tried to verify their allegations, studying telephone records, for instance, to confirm that Clinton had been calling a certain woman. The

reporters did not print the salacious allegations and rumors about Mrs. Clinton that figure so prominently in the *Spectator* piece. The paper was far more responsible than the *Spectator*, or than CNN.

On the other hand, the *Times* piece had its weaknesses. For one thing, if the *Times* reporters had been able to continue reporting for a longer period, they might have done a better job weighing the troopers' credibility. Shortly after their piece appeared, the story broke that the two chief accusers — officers Larry Patterson and Roger Perry — had allegedly lied to insurance investigators to cover up how Patterson had wrecked a state police car while driving under the influence of alcohol. The original *Times* story would have been much stronger had this information been in it, giving the reader a better basis for determining what to believe.

Secondly, the paper could perhaps have done a better job dealing with the allegation that Clinton had tried to buy troopers' silence with the offer of federal jobs. That claim was mentioned in the lead of the story. Trooper Perry was then quoted as saying that another trooper, who refused to let his name be used, had been called by Clinton, who supposedly made the job offer. The White House denied the allegation. A few days later, evidently under pressure from the White House, the trooper's lawyer filed an affidavit, denying Clinton had offered jobs for silence. Miller says the *Times* reporters reinterviewed the trooper, who reiterated that Clinton had offered jobs but had not explicitly said they would be in return for silence. It would have been preferable to nail down this point before publication.

The story led to disagreements within the newspaper. Its media critic, David Shaw, was quoted as saying that, while it was a tough call, he did not think the piece should have been published. Others felt more reporting should have been done.

Despite its flaws, the *Times* piece was a step in the right direction — covering private conduct in a responsible way and trying to cull fact from rumor. That is probably the only way for Clint to force a bit into Flint's mouth and to have some hope of influencing the direction in which he charges. ♦



# DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to *The Associated Press*, for selective memories. In a sentimental Thanksgiving story on the “haunting” death of a homeless Vietnam veteran who had lived on the sheltered sidewalk outside the building that houses, among other organizations, the AP’s Washington bureau, the wire service retraced the unfortunate man’s history while recalling his dignity, neatness, and taste for pizza, as well as his reassuring presence to others on the street; it also recalled that he had once been forced away from the door of the building because tenants had complained. The piece forgot to mention that the source of those complaints had been *The Associated Press*.

◆ **LAUREL** to *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, for showing how absentee ballots made the vote grow fonder. In the wake of the special November 2 state senatorial election in the city’s second district — an election that machine tallies initially gave to Republican Bruce Marks but which later swung to Democrat William Stinson in an absentee-ballot landslide — the *Inquirer* sought, and found, an explanation for the curious outcome. By knocking on door after door in the district’s Latino neighborhoods, reporters learned from immigrant residents (many of whom had little or no English and even less understanding of their new country’s voting regulations) how Democratic campaign workers had taught them about “*la nueva forma de votar*” — the new way to vote in the safety and comfort of their homes and under the helpful eye of those caring campaign workers. Some new-way voters were so confused by the application and ballot that they voted more than once; others thought they were signing up for home improvements; still others, marking their X at the designated spot, voted for candidates they did not support. Based as it was on anecdotal testimony and with the ballots themselves impossible to trace, the *Inquirer*’s story did not prevent Stinson’s bitterly contested (and hastily arranged) swearing in; it did, however, prompt a series of state and federal investigations, currently under way.

◆ **DART** to *The Wall Street Journal*, for an identity crisis on its op-ed page. In his October 13 piece criticizing the Supreme Court’s refusal to review a trademark infringement case involving Quaker Oats, Kenneth Starr was identified as “a former federal

judge and President Bush’s solicitor general”; not until October 28 did readers learn from a letter to the editor that Starr is a partner in a law firm that now represents Quaker in the trademark litigation. Similarly, in his September 24 piece endorsing the lifting of barriers to telephone company entry into the cable field, Thomas W. Hazlett was identified as a professor of telecommunications policy; not until October 19 did readers learn from a letter to the editor that Hazlett was an expert witness for Bell Atlantic in federal proceedings — and not until November 23 did they learn from a letter to the editor from Hazlett himself that he had noted his Bell connection in his original draft and that the reference had been removed by *Wall Street Journal* editors “at their discretion, and over my objection.” The “inference that I am not forthcoming,” Hazlett went on, “should hereby be corrected.” (Inferences about the forthcomingness of the *Journal* are something else again.)

◆ **DART** to NBC’s *Now* and to *The New York Times*, for misplaced mockery. In a December 1 update on the 1991 murder of a California woman who had been smothered in her home — a still-unsolved crime to which the women’s talking parrot could conceivably yield a clue — the TV newsmagazine found the circumstances of her death so entertaining it could barely keep a straight face. Introduced and wrapped up by a smirking Tom Brokaw and narrated in stagey melodramatic tones by reporter Keith Morrison, the segment combined shots of the scene of the grisly murder (for which the victim’s business partner is now on trial) with rolling footage and theme music from “television’s old *Falcon Crest* ... which also involved a bird.” Although the killing had occurred “while the prized parrot peered from its perch,” Morrison concluded cutely, “the winged witness” would not be testifying and had, “probably wisely, refused to comment.” Similarly, on September 28, after five robbers armed with automatic and submachine guns invaded a fancy food market on Manhattan’s Upper West Side minutes before its midnight closing, ordering forty terrified employees to lie on the sawdust floor and forcing the manager to open the safes, the *Times* could not resist. Although the robbers seemed “oblivious to the finer points of kohirabi and fresh poblano peppers,” wrote Robert McFadden, “the robbery itself — during which



four of the suspects fled with \$10,000 while a fifth was captured by police — “was not just a piece of carrot cake.” On the morning after the holdup, McFadden went on with unseemly relish, “epicures and the merely curious ducked in for a glimpse of the looted safe, a whiff of North Sea smoked salmon or a tidbit of gossip on who stood where or cried hysterically when the guns came out.” One wonders if those forty terrified employees were equally amused.

◆ **DART** to the *Los Angeles Times*, for catered coverage. The page-one entrée to its Thursday, January 6, food section — already printed on January 4 — was a meaty piece, prepared by staff writer Daniel P. Puzo and decorated with a colorful 12-by-12-inch picture of eggs, fish, and other suspect foods, whose headline asked the question, “Unsafe at Any Meal?” and whose subhead took note of the fact that “In 1993, Americans came face to face with the hazards of the national food supply. It was the year of eating dangerously.” However, when the paper’s major supermarket advertisers — who were presented with advance copies of the section by the *Times*’s marketing department — found that choice of language far too tough to swallow, the front page of the 1.2-million copy press run was scrapped. The blander substitute *Times* readers were served: “America’s Food Supply: What Consumers Need to Know to Cook and Eat Safely.”

◆ **LAUREL** to the New York City weekly *Village Voice* and reporter Russ W. Baker, for walking a lonely beat. After a relentless year-long investigation into the inner workings of the powerful, 20,000-member Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association — founded a hundred years ago to help the widows and orphans of slain police officers and operating today with \$63 million a year in taxpayer funds and union dues and with virtually no accountability — Baker on December 7 delivered his indictment. Among the 17,000-word bill of particulars: disturbing associations between PBA leaders and leaders of the mob; foiled investigations of crooked cops; missing or misappropriated funds; grossly extravagant payments to lawyers, lobbyists, consultants, insurance brokers, and labor negotiators (producing less-than-extravagant benefits for the rank and file). With the searchbeam currently focused on the city’s new mayor, his new police chief, and their promises of reform, Baker’s exposé compellingly showed why genuine reform would have to include the PBA. (Baker, it should be noted in the interest of full disclosure, occasionally writes for *CJR*.) In the following week’s edition, the *Voice* expanded the indictment to include New York’s daily papers, which, as an editorial put it, had reacted with “deafening silence” to Baker’s piece. Suggesting that such silence might be attributed to the fear of alienating PBA officials who in large measure

control journalists’ access to police, the *Voice* concluded that, “If so, the PBA is even more above the law than we had thought.”

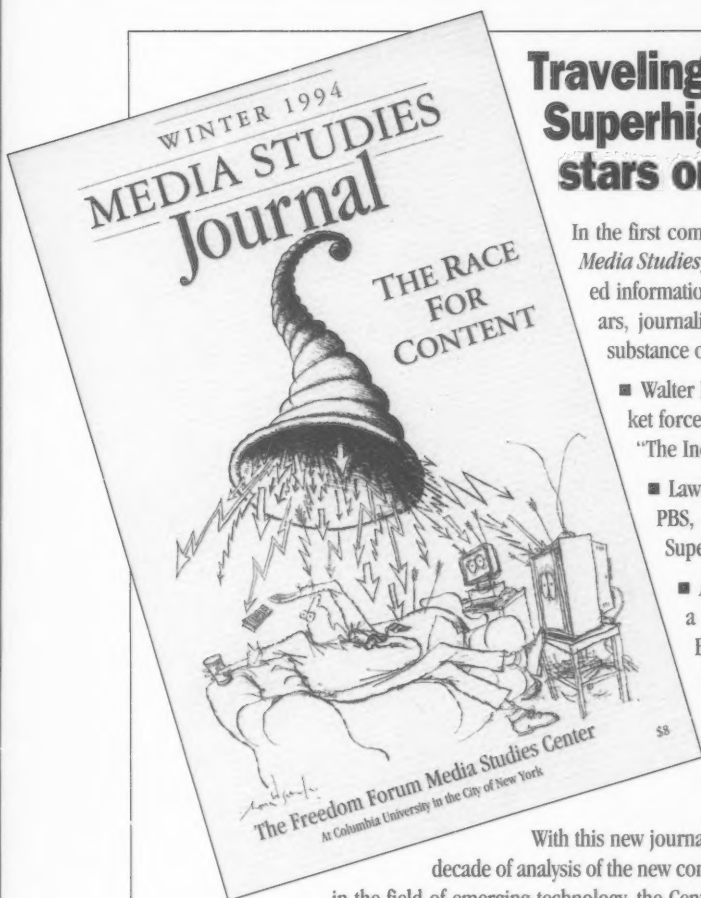
◆ **LAUREL** to the Troy, New York, *Record*, and reporter Dawn Fallik, for telling tales out of school. Fallik’s four-month examination of the city’s multi-million-dollar asbestos removal project — focusing, in particular, on a \$400,000 contract for asbestos consulting services awarded by the Enlarged City School District to one Failsafe Risk Management Alternatives Inc. — taught readers plenty they didn’t know. Drawing on documents obtained under the state’s Freedom of Information law, the four-part series (November 14-17) revealed that the no-bid contract with Failsafe was routinely costing the district at least twice as much as what other districts were paying for similar services on even larger projects; that the offspring of two top district officials were employed by Failsafe; and that, contrary to conflict-of-interest regulations, Failsafe was financially linked to the company that was paid to remove the asbestos that Failsafe claimed to have found. So inflamed by the *Record*’s report — and by the school board’s November 23 decision to hire an independent firm — was Failsafe president James Thomsen that he put up a dozen anti-*Record* billboards, sent out anti-*Record* mailings to district taxpayers, offered \$100 inducements to *Record* advertisers to switch to the competing *Times Union*, and threatened to bring a libel suit that, he told the alternative weekly *Metroland*, he hoped would put the *Record* out of business. As for Thomsen’s own business, he seemed burned out on asbestos and is pinning his hopes instead on lead-control regulations now being developed by the EPA. “We’ll be opening up a lead-abatement center here,” he told the *Record*. “I’m waiting for the pot of gold to drop out the sky.”

◆ **LAUREL** to the Woodland Hills, California, *Daily News*, for earthshaking journalism. With its newsroom destroyed, its printing press dead, and the personal lives of its staff turned upside-down, the *Daily News* managed to make good on its name, producing (with the neighborly help of several Copley papers) a special ad-free edition on January 19, thus missing not a day of publication. Here is how editor Bob Burdick opened his January 18 story recalling that memorable day: “At 4:29 A.M. Tuesday, 23 hours and 58 minutes after the Northridge earthquake, I heard a car out front and leapt from my bed. It was my *Daily News*. I unwrapped it — in all its 12-page glory — as I walked back inside .... Then, for the first time since my father died in 1982, I wept.”

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*This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR’s managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.*





## Traveling the Information Superhighway: Gateway to the stars or road to nowhere?

In the first comprehensive analysis of its kind, the winter issue of the *Media Studies Journal* maps out the highly touted but largely uncharted information superhighway. In "The Race for Content," 34 scholars, journalists, business leaders and policy-makers forecast the substance of this brave new electronic world.

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# The Selling of

When Jim Cooper announced his alternative to the Clinton plan, he dubbed it a "major force" and the only bill with "significant bipartisan support." The press took his word for it.

by *Trudy Lieberman*

**I**n early October Representative Jim Cooper of Tennessee, the conservative Democrats' guru on health care reform, called a press conference to announce he was throwing his version of reform into the congressional mix. That event should not have been particularly newsworthy since the year before Cooper had introduced similar legislation, which resulted in only a few brief press references.

But this time Cooper was a more clever marketer, and he positioned his plan as a middle-of-the-road approach with bipartisan appeal. At the press conference, he distributed a chart that showed his bill — a *laissez faire* version of managed competition — smack in the middle of all the proposals on the table. Cooper's bill does not require employers to purchase insurance for their workers; it doesn't require individuals to buy insurance; nor does it establish a mechanism (aside from market competition) for cost control.

"The administration started with managed competition and went to the left. The Republicans took managed competition and went to the right. Our bill is squarely in the middle and is the only one with significant bipartisan support," Cooper told reporters. "It is the first health reform approach since Harry Truman to get major Democrat and Republican support," an exaggeration that went unchallenged. In 1973, Republicans supported federal legislation that propelled health maintenance organizations into national prominence; and in 1983, Reagan Republicans were the driving

force behind major changes in the way Medicare pays hospitals, a significant health reform that has since been copied by other countries.

Reporters also received a statement from The Bipartisan Group on Health Reform which asserted that "with over forty co-sponsors . . . this bipartisan effort stands to be a major force in developing legislation that can be passed and signed into law during the 103rd Congress." Even with a handful of Republicans on board (19 of the 176 House members), Cooper's proposal had far fewer co-sponsors (48 when it was introduced) than other bills, including the president's with 99, the plan pushed by House Republicans with 138, and the one supported by advocates of a Canadian-type system with 91. The number of co-sponsors, however, is not necessarily indicative of support, since many co-sponsors of Cooper's bill, as well as those who have endorsed rival proposals, have attached their names to more than one plan.

As for support from the public, the polls showed that ordinary people knew little or nothing about any proposal, including the Cooper brand of managed competition.

Cooper revealed his marketing plan to *Roll Call*, the newspaper that covers Congress. He explained that one could try to push a bill through the committee route, a perilous strategy for the administration (and for him as well) since the leadership of the major subcommittees in the House with jurisdiction over health care (Henry Waxman and Fortney Stark, both California Democrats) has expressed support for a single-payer, Canadian-type system. Or one could follow what he called a strategy of "preemptive compromise," in which a bill with a groundswell of support or a "supermajority," as he put it, could be positioned as the ultimate agreement. Such a bill could then be substituted on the House floor for a piece of legislation that had gone the committee route. The finer points of this strategy leaked out after a small group of congressmen attended a

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# "Clinton Lite"

meeting sponsored by Cooper and Senator John Chafee in late October. Members who were there told *The Washington Post* that a "goal was to 'control the debate' on health care by positioning themselves in the 'mainstream' or 'centrist' position" and become a force with which the Clintons had to negotiate.

To succeed, Cooper and his allies needed help from the press to give their bill an aura of strong support, generate more co-sponsors, and drum up the public backing the bill sorely lacked. A review of media stories between October and early January shows that the press played right into Cooper's hands. Looking for something new and dramatic to say in the weeks following the president's late-September speech on health care reform, the media seized on the language in the Cooper press releases and elevated Cooper's vision, in the words of *Newsweek*, to the very "model" of compromise. In a piece decidedly negative toward "Big Sister" Hillary Clinton's approach and positive toward Cooper's, *Newsweek* pronounced the Cooper bill "less bureaucratically cumbersome," "fiscally more realistic," and "probably closer to the congressional center than the Clinton plan."

Liberally donating space to Cooper's self-serving quotes and sometimes making pronouncements of their own, a number of other influential news organizations helped promote Cooper's grand compromise. Shortly after the press conference, *The Washington Times* reported that the Cooper bill is "occupying the political center in the forthcoming battle."

*ABC Nightly News* pronounced the plan "serious and credible." The *Los Angeles Times* called it "politically palatable," and *U.S. News & World Report* reported in its Washington Whispers column that Cooper's proposal was "most likely to succeed" because it has "bipartisan middle-of-the-road support" and will cost less — the very points made in the Cooper press materials. *The New*



*Republic* flatly endorsed the Cooper plan. *The New York Times* waited longer than other publications, but it too latched on to the Cooper promotion. In MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROADER RIDES HIGH WITH HIS OWN HEALTH CARE PLAN, published in early January, the *Times* reported that "a lowly Democrat gains notice with a 'Clinton lite' plan," the catchy phrase Cooper himself coined.

Cooper used the press to advance the notion that his bill was winning a popularity contest. *The Washington Post* quoted him as saying his bill "is becoming so popular it's scaring people to death down at the White House." In a story headed ONE-MAN FORCE IN HEALTH CARE FRAY, *USA Today* talked of a threat to Clinton by a "mild-mannered," thirty-nine-year-old lawyer from Shelbyville, Tennessee, who told the paper: "I have the most popular health plan in America. It breaks the political deadlock. It's a doable deal." *Time* weighed in with its own flattering profile of Cooper. "He's the Man with the Too Popular Plan" gave readers the impression that Cooper was on the march and perhaps unstoppable. "They're

**Tennessee congressman Jim Cooper launches his bill at a press conference, the first step in his strategy of "preemptive compromise"**



What was missing from the coverage was solid analysis. Who was supporting the bill and why? How would it affect ordinary people?

afraid our bill is too popular. We're right in the middle. We're the only bipartisan approach," Cooper told *Time*, trumpeting the refrain from his press conference.

One may fairly ask who, apart from Cooper and his forty-eight co-sponsors, found the plan so attractive — the American people, who in reality knew little about it; the Washington cognoscenti; employers and health care providers who favor the bill because it barely disrupts business as usual? The press did briefly mention that certain segments of the business community liked Cooper's plan, but it didn't dig deeper.

None of the reporters whose stories *CJR* examined had bothered to search Federal Elections Commission records to see who had recently contributed to Cooper's election campaigns, a task left to the consumer group Citizen Action. Citizen Action found that Cooper, who is running for the Senate, was indeed the bagman for health and insurance interests, receiving in the first six months of 1993 some \$164,000 from doctors, hospital employees, insurance agents, and insurance company employees. That sum was the largest amount given to any House member by individuals representing those special interest groups. Twenty-five thousand dollars came from employees of two large hospital chains, Healthtrust and HCA-Hospital Corp. of America.

Several papers did pick up the Citizen Action press release. *The Wall Street Journal*, as part of its own story on Cooper's emerging stature, devoted a paragraph to explaining the large contributions from employees of Healthtrust and HCA-Hospital Corp. "He brings a moderate viewpoint to operate from," a Healthtrust vice-president told the *Journal*.

But what was missing from the coverage of Cooper's bill was solid analysis of how the bill would affect ordinary people — analysis the polls say the public wants. As of late December *CJR* found no stories that explained how the plan would affect those Americans who are not insured and who still might not be if Cooper's plan becomes law. There was not even agreement among news stories on the number of people the plan would leave without insurance. *The Palm Beach Post* reported that Cooper "predicted [his plan] would provide insurance to nearly as many of the 37 million uninsured Americans as Clinton's plan." (Clinton's plan covers 100 percent of the uninsured.) *The Washington Post* quoted Cooper as saying his plan would cover "60 percent of the uninsured" (leaving 40 percent uncovered), while the *Los Angeles Times* noted that, "by Cooper's own estimate, the bill would not cover

about one-fifth (or 20 percent) of those currently lacking health insurance."

No one pinned Cooper down on the numbers or interpreted them through the pocketbooks of families who would be affected. The bill calls for subsidies to help some families buy insurance, but what would happen if a family was too rich for the subsidies but too poor to buy coverage on its own? How would the family get insurance? Plenty of stories, however, quoted Cooper's solution: come back in a few years and pass another law to help these people out.

Where were the stories that examined whether the Cooper plan would actually reduce costs of the health care system? Health care purchasing cooperatives are the main instrument of cost containment, but in Cooper's plan only employers with fewer than 100 workers are required to obtain coverage through them, if they want to continue deducting the cost of health insurance for their workers. This arrangement would leave all other employers free to operate outside the mechanism for curtailing costs and to continue the status quo, if they wished. The Congressional Budget Office found that the earlier version of Cooper's bill would actually increase costs of the health care system, at least initially, a point reported by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in February 1993, but ignored in the latest wave of Cooper promotional pieces.

There were quick, passing references to various features in the Cooper bill, and a few papers did side-by-side comparisons of the bill's main elements with those of other plans. But what passed for "explanations" were so elliptical that they further obscured the issues. *Newsweek's* pro-Cooper piece, for example, told readers: "Individuals could deduct the entire cost of health insurance before paying taxes," and "Cooper's plan would be more affordable to taxpayers because it would not offer many of the bribes the Clinton plan proposes to win over various interest groups." What taxes? Which individuals? Under what circumstances would they pay them? Just how would the plan be more affordable? Would it lower tax rates? And what bribes did *Newsweek* mean — coverage for prescription drugs and some long-term care, both of which are generally thought to be benefits the public wants? *Newsweek* didn't explain.

How the press covered the Cooper bill perhaps best illustrates why a Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University poll found that the public has more faith in the American Association of Retired Persons, clearly not an objective source, to tell them the best course for health care reform than they do in the press. Twenty-nine percent said they had a great deal more confidence in the AARP; only 7 percent said the same about TV and newspaper reporters. Hardly a healthy state of affairs. ♦



Covering Health Care Reform  
**Round Two**

# A GUIDE TO FLASHPOINTS, OPTIONS, AND INSIDE MOVES

by *Trudy Lieberman*

**U**p to now, much of the coverage of health care reform has focused on politics rather than substance. The ongoing Media Monitoring Project of The Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, The Kaiser Family Foundation, and CJR has reported (see "Covering Health Care Reform: Round One," CJR November/December 1993) that, from April through July, stories about politics outnumbered stories about people by almost two to one, and that trend has continued throughout the fall. A prime example is the coverage given to the bill introduced by Representative Jim Cooper, which has captured media attention more for its political intrigue than its ability to solve the health care crisis (see page 20).

It's not surprising, then, that a Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University poll has found that the public is not well informed about either the underlying problems health reform is trying to solve or the major proposals that attempt to cure them. An uninformed public is vulnerable to the pleadings and propaganda of the major interest groups — doctors, hospitals, managed care organi-

zations, insurance companies, pharmaceutical makers, and employers — some of whom have already waged multimillion-dollar ad campaigns to spread their message. A press more concerned with politics than substance is equally vulnerable to manipulation by special interests that use reporters to promote their lofty rhetoric while saving their real agenda for members of Congress at legislative mark-up sessions, at which members of Congress, with lobbyists in the wings, hammer out the bills they send to the floor.

What follows is a map of the coming legislative battle that journalists can use to acquaint themselves with the terrain over which the fight will be waged. It outlines the major flashpoints, options, possible compromises, and consequences to the public. The issues are complex and intertwined. How each is resolved significantly impacts on the others.

## **INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ALL**

**Flashpoints:** Whether all Americans will have health insurance is the pivotal question. What is meant by "coverage" and how it's to be provided will shape the answer. The jargon here is slippery. "Universal coverage" refers to a mechanism for providing actual insurance coverage for all people. "Universal access" has come to mean eliminating restrictions imposed by insurance companies that make it hard for sick people to

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obtain full coverage or any coverage at all. With universal coverage, everyone has insurance; with universal access, everyone has the chance to buy insurance if they can afford it.

**Options:** Only two paths to universal coverage are given any odds for passage — an employer mandate and an individual mandate. An employer mandate requires all employers to provide coverage for their workers and pay a portion of the premium (80 percent in the Clinton plan). Since half of the 39 million people currently uninsured are also employed and another 17 percent work a part of the year, supporters believe this is the most efficient way of achieving universal coverage. An individual mandate, on the other hand, gets employers off the hook by instead requiring all individuals to buy insurance for themselves and their families. (Employers can continue to provide coverage, but if they don't, individuals will have to buy it themselves.) The main route for providing universal access is simply to outlaw insurance company practices that make it difficult for sick people to buy health coverage.

Varying subsidies and premium discounts are important elements of each option. With an employer mandate, subsidies help small employers buy coverage for their workers and assist individuals not connected to the workforce who still must buy coverage. With either an individual mandate or a universal access strategy, subsidies would also be needed for individuals who will have trouble affording an insurance policy. Premium discounts, which give reduced prices for insurance, might also be necessary to put coverage within the reach of every citizen.

Enforcement mechanisms are also part of the employer and individual mandate options. They can make it tough for people to avoid buying insurance, or be so weak it will be easy for people to go bare.

**Possible compromises:** Although one-third of all small businesses provide insurance for their employees, the National Federation of Independent Business is fighting employer mandates on behalf of the two-thirds of small businesses that don't. At the same time, President Clinton has said he will veto any bill that does not provide universal coverage. Ways around this dilemma include:

- Further delaying the date when everyone must be covered. The president's bill calls for universal coverage by 1998, but the date could be moved well into the next century.

- Requiring employers to pay a smaller portion of the premium, say 50 percent instead of 80 percent.

- Requiring an employer mandate for firms that have more than a specified number of employees, such as 75 or 100, and requiring an individual mandate for employees of smaller firms.

- Increasing the level of subsidies (already generous in the Clinton plan) to small employers as a way of bribing them to support an employer mandate.

- Increasing the level of subsidies for individuals who have to buy their own coverage and making assistance

available to more people. This option might make an individual mandate more palatable to some groups.

The universal access approach has its own compromises that will determine how fully and completely barriers to insurance coverage will be erased. They include:

- Allowing insurance carriers to refuse coverage for unhealthy individuals who must purchase their own insurance, but requiring carriers to cover all employees, sick or well, who work for small firms. This compromise, in effect, could perpetuate the status quo, in which individuals who have to buy coverage on their own would still be subject to the whims of insurance company underwriting practices.

- Allowing companies to consider applicants' health status when granting coverage, but limiting how much extra premium they can charge.

**Consequences to the public:** Compromises are almost certain to limit universality. A delay in implementing universal coverage means that the uninsured must wait longer, and gives Congress a chance to revisit the issue and perhaps repeal or further postpone universal coverage, which happened in Massachusetts.

Reducing the amount that employers are required to contribute toward workers' premiums shifts more insurance costs to employees. Employers who now pay 100 percent of the premium may decide to pay only the required 80 percent, 50 percent, or whatever percentage is chosen, and make their employees pay the rest. Individuals might also have to shoulder more of the premiums if an individual mandate is chosen and some employers choose to drop coverage they now provide. A further question is whether employers who shed health insurance costs will pass on that savings to their workers in the form of higher wages, since foregone wages are thought to fund employer-provided health insurance in the first place.

With any approach, insurance might still be unaffordable unless significant subsidies are available or premiums suddenly become more "reasonable" as a result of wildly successful cost containment. For example, unless there are caps on the amount a low-income family is required to spend for coverage, a subsidy that kicks in when, say, a family of four has an income 50 percent above the poverty level, or about \$21,500, wouldn't help those families with incomes just over the line. They might still have to spend roughly 22 percent of their income for insurance, assuming an annual premium averaging around \$5,000.

A universal access strategy solves the problem for about one million people who have health conditions that prevent them from getting coverage. It would do nothing for the other 38 million who could get insurance but can't afford it.

#### WHO WILL PAY?

**Flashpoints:** With an employer mandate, employers bear most of the cost of covering the uninsured, but with all approaches, someone must pay for the subsidies to



## Any compromise that involved taxation of insurance premiums would fall heavily on middle-class employees

small employers and individuals. Who finances those subsidies, how much money will be available, and for what services are among the battle's most explosive issues.

**Options:** Money can come from new revenue sources or be transferred from existing health care programs. A broad-based payroll tax, like the one that finances Social Security and Medicare, or a value-added tax on goods and services, paid by all citizens, could finance coverage for the uninsured. But only one proposal asks for such taxes. The others call instead for shuffling money around and imposing a few new limited taxes that are unlikely to generate significant opposition. Those options include:

- Cutting payments to doctors and hospitals under the Medicare program — a major financing device in many proposals.

- Limiting eligibility for Medicaid benefits so that fewer people are covered.

- Imposing additional taxes on socially undesirable commodities such as cigarettes, alcohol, ammunition, and weapons.

- Imposing taxes on employers who decide to offer workers an insurance package that is richer than benefits provided in a prescribed standardized plan. If employers choose richer plans, they would be taxed on a portion of the premiums that exceeds a set amount that varies from proposal to proposal. Besides being a revenue raiser, this provision is supposed to control health care costs.

- Imposing taxes on employees by treating employer premium contributions for richer insurance benefits as taxable income to the employee.

- Imposing taxes on employers who choose not to belong to the regional health alliances that some proposals rely on for cost containment.

- Creating a less comprehensive benefit package. Some proposals call for a standard set of benefits available to everyone, including payment for all doctor, hospital, and laboratory bills, and, depending on the plan, some coverage for prescription drugs, mental health services, and long-term care.

**Possible compromises:** A major compromise will involve how much to slash Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals. Proposals call for cuts ranging from \$124 billion to \$33 billion over the next five years. Health care providers will wage a fierce fight on this one, and the level of cuts will probably fall somewhere in between. The Clinton plan counts on additional cigarette taxes to raise about \$89 billion, but smaller Medicare cuts could be traded for additional taxes on alcohol, ammunition, or weapons.

Compromises are also possible on the taxation issues. Although some proposals call for a tax on employers who choose to offer a better-than-standard benefit package, a tax levied on individuals could sneak into the financing mix. Currently the amount of premium an employer pays for each worker is not counted as taxable income to the employee. But that could change, and workers might well find themselves paying taxes on the

value of their health insurance premiums. The date such taxes take effect and the amount of the tax penalty are negotiable, depending on how desperate the revenue need.

As a way of reducing the pot of money required, the standard benefit package might be reduced. For example, if prescription drugs are included, people may have to pay large copayments or deductibles before the coverage begins. Mental health coverage might include fewer days of treatment. Abortions may be excluded altogether.

**Consequences to the public:** Inadequate financing means many of the uninsured will remain uninsured.

Since much of the financing burden falls on Medicare, insufficient cuts and therefore insufficient money available for subsidies could exclude certain groups now targeted for assistance: for example, early retirees between the age of 55 and 64 who, under the Clinton plan, would have to pay only 20 percent of the cost of their coverage, with government subsidies paying the rest. On the other hand, if Medicare cuts are too severe, current Medicare beneficiaries might suffer. Medicare now pays about 60 percent of what private insurers pay doctors, but if that amount falls much lower, some doctors might stop treating Medicare patients.

Funding compromises could also touch Medicaid recipients. The cuts prescribed by the Clinton plan would result in some 6 million Medicaid beneficiaries losing health coverage — coverage that is now comprehensive and free. When those former beneficiaries are turned loose in the marketplace, they could end up paying substantial out-of-pocket costs not only for premiums but also for services that were covered under Medicaid — eye glasses and dental care, for example.

Any taxation of insurance premiums would fall heavily on middle-class employees. If employers chose to provide richer benefits and pay the tax penalty, they might reduce workers' wages to cover those additional expenses. If instead they reduced benefits to avoid the tax, some workers would find their benefits less comprehensive than before. And if a portion of employer contributions were counted as taxable income to workers, their tax bills would go up. For workers who now have coverage, such a tax would be regressive; employees with lower incomes would pay a higher portion of their income in additional taxes. That's because the amount currently excluded from taxation represents a greater percentage of a lower-wage worker's income. Middle-class employees might also have to pay additional out-of-pocket costs for extra coverage from a supplemental policy which might be necessary if the standard benefits are skimpy.

### COST CONTAINMENT

**Flashpoints:** The U.S. health care system is the costliest in the world and the only one without effective cost containment. The rhetoric from special interests (and some



## The U.S. health care system is the costliest in the world and the only one without effective cost containment

politicians) demands that costs be controlled; their lobbying strategy demands otherwise. Under the guise of "fair financing" or by raising the specter of health care rationing, every major interest group will try to avoid measures that will control the cost of medical services and reduce the amount of money its members make. Meaningful cost containment is up for grabs.

**Options:** Major vehicles for containing costs are:

- Health alliances or purchasing cooperatives. In theory, all employers would pay premiums to the alliances for their workers. All individuals who must buy coverage on their own would also pay premiums to the alliance. The alliance would pool the money, purchase the coverage selected by employers and individuals, and pay the health plan a fee that would cover the cost of providing medical services to each person covered under the plan. Although a variety of plans would be available, each would offer one plan containing the same required standard benefits. Health plans sold by insurance companies and managed care organizations through the alliances would compete to offer the lowest-cost plan to attract employers and individuals. They would achieve those low-cost arrangements by pressuring providers in their networks to keep fees down. As a result, growth in the nation's health care bill supposedly would slow. In addition, alliances would establish fee schedules for health care providers who chose not to be in a managed care network. In other words, all doctors would be under some kind of fee control.

- Premium caps. The Clinton plan calls for limits on the amount that insurance premiums can increase. Through complicated formulas, a newly created National Health Board would determine a per capita premium target for each alliance area. Insurance companies and managed care organizations selling health plans through the alliance would have to achieve the target premium. If they don't, the board would require them to reduce fees to providers to bring their premiums in line with the targets. In other words, by controlling the amount premiums can rise, the mechanism would indirectly control the costs of medical services.

- Taxing premiums. Taxing premiums paid by employers that exceed the cost of the lowest-priced plan offered in an alliance, as well as including as taxable income to employees some of the premiums paid by employers on their behalf, is supposed to force employers and employees to become cost-conscious and choose the cheapest plans. Since all the plans would try to offer the cheapest coverage, fees paid to providers would eventually come down, resulting in a reduction of health care costs overall, or so the theory goes. If people choose the cheapest plan that offers minimal benefits, they may use fewer medical services, and that in turn saves money for the system.

**Possible compromises:** Big compromises are probable here as lobbyists pull out all stops to defeat cost controls. Compromises will center on:

- Number of alliances required in a region. Choices are between one alliance per region or multiple

alliances.

- Structure of the alliances. All employers or only some may be required to join. The Clinton plan requires all employers with fewer than 5,000 employees to join, but there will be pressure to require alliance participation for only employers with a small number of workers, perhaps 100 or less, which would result in only about half of all U.S. workers being covered under the alliances. Compromises involving the size of a firm that must join and whether participation is voluntary or mandatory will be aimed at maintaining business as usual for employers, preserving lucrative markets for insurance companies and their agents, and keeping the control of the system fragmented and diffuse.

- Power of the alliances. An alliance may have power to actually set premium rates and force health insurance carriers to lower them; it may be allowed to use only moral suasion to nudge carriers into line; or it may be able to do neither. It may be able to establish fee schedules for doctors who don't participate in any formal managed care network (those who want to practice traditional fee-for-service medicine) and prohibit them from charging patients amounts above what they'd receive from the fee schedule. Or it may have none of those powers. An alliance may be able to reject certain plans in which the quality of care is questionable, or it may have to offer any health plan as long as the plan's premiums are not too outrageous (a provision in the Clinton plan).

- Whether to have premium caps. If the caps survive, the amount of the increase allowed in the formulas for setting the per capita targets might be more generous than currently called for in the Clinton proposal, with the result that premiums might rise faster and have less impact on controlling costs.

**Consequences to the public:** Multiple, voluntary alliances with weak powers and no premium caps mean minimal, or no, cost containment, as well as higher administrative expenses piled onto the health care system. To the extent that premiums will continue to rise because health care costs are unrestrained, insurance will still be unaffordable to many. A nation that spends an ever-increasing percentage of Gross National Product on health care has fewer resources to spend on other goods and services.

Cost containment may also affect the quality of care people will receive, the kind of choices they can make, and perhaps the extra costs they may have to pay. If alliances have no control over the quality of medical care provided by the plans, then people may have no assurance they are getting quality along with low cost. Furthermore, unless the plans selling through the alliances offer what is known as a "point-of-service" option and allow people to pay more, opt out of the plan, and choose their own doctors, those people could find their choice of providers somewhat restricted. Of course, the more people outside the cost control mechanism the more difficult it will be to control provider costs. ♦

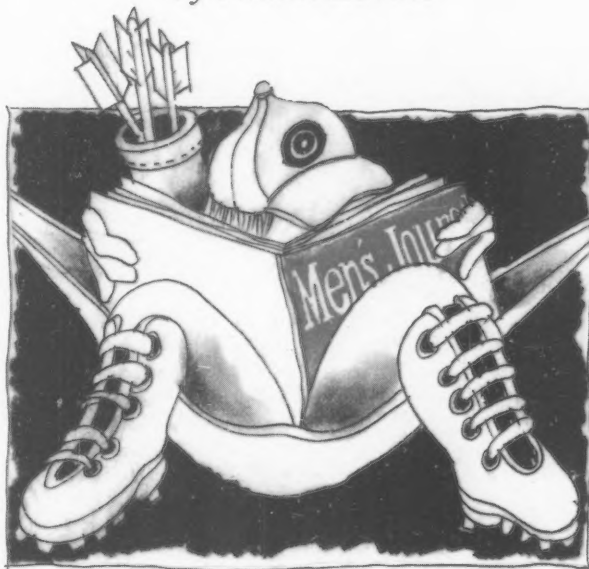


# The Man • in the Mirror

What *Esquire*, *GQ*,  
*Men's Journal*, and *Details* tell  
us about the American male  
by Judith Levine

Men's magazines tend to fall into two categories. They're either about squirrel hunting or CB radio; or (and there's no polite way to say this) they're about pussy. My newsstand carries hundreds of both kinds. No fewer than forty publications displayed cater to automotive aficionados, almost as many to weaponry fanatics. If the handful of mainstream periodicals, like the 3.6 million-circulation *Sports Illustrated*, do not speak to a man's particular passion, there are hobby rags ranging from the plain-vanilla *Popular Mechanics* to the more fetishistic *KitPlanes*. Saltwater fishermen, stereo connoisseurs, and Nintendoists all have a publication just for

Judith Levine is the author of *My Enemy, My Love: Women, Men, and the Dilemmas of Gender*, published last year.



them. And, speaking of fetishes, I lost count at fifty skin magazines — past *Playboy* to *Jugs* and beyond.

In number and variety, these special-interest periodicals dominate the men's field. But worth watching for its influence on mainstream popular culture is a third category: "general-interest" men's

magazines, which address the whole man and not just his enthusiasms for howitzers or golf. The sector is puny, at this writing comprising only *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Details*, and *Men's Journal*. The first three are widely considered to be economically sturdy (*Men's Journal* is too young for prognosis), but compared with their counterparts in the women's field, their readerships are small. Whereas five women's publications boast circulations over 4 million, even the strongest men's books have a

hard time breaking 850,000.

There's tough competition doing so. *Esquire* at sixty is suffering a protracted identity crisis, and this fall its editor-in-chief, Terry McDonnell, was kicked downstairs to *Sports Afield* and replaced by *New York Magazine*'s Edward Kosner. *GQ*, having led *Esquire* in ad



## Is *Men's Journal* pitching not to Hemingway but to Walter Mitty? No matter. Dreams are what consumer magazines live on

pages, in 1993 pulled ahead in circulation for the first time. New entries founder. The last few years saw *Smart*, *Men's Life*, *Men*, and *M* dash past. Among newcomers only *Details* is healthy, and this downtown tabloid transformed to a glossy men's book by Condé Nast three years ago competes less against its older men's colleagues than against *Rolling Stone* and *Vibe* for its plugged-in readers.

Sparring in this tiny ring continues, accompanied by the minute-to-minute commentary of industry scorekeepers. (In June, *Media-week* found "Market Flat for Men's Magazines"; in October, "Men's Books Optimistic About 1994"; in November, "'94 Starts Slow for Men's Books.") But the male reader is not just a consumer of Absolut vodka or Ray-Ban sunglasses, and these magazines tell more than a marketing story.

Coded into the text and images of *Esquire*, *GQ*, *Details*, and *Men's Journal* are messages about social transformation. As the editors labor to arouse the desires and assuage the worries of men — or at least high-earning, largely white, urban, male Baby Boomers and Busters — they are responding to, and doing their part to reshape, masculinity.

Within the past two years, the publishers of *Rolling Stone* have spawned two publications: *Men's Journal* and, Barbie to its Ken, *Family Life*. With anything domestic or emotional thus segregated, *Men's Journal* was free to rejuvenate

masculinity — early publicity called the tone "Hemingwayesque" — replacing the old wolf's sheepskin with Gore-Tex.

"Men have always been oriented toward action and accomplishment, a perspective that life is, or should be, an adventure," wrote editor-in-chief Jann Wenner and editor John Rasmus in the

To take any homosocial sheen off this manly life, most issues include one sinewy female athlete; to scuff its frivolity, one grim feature on the Mafia or famine. But these hardly register: *Men's Journal* calls to high-earning muscleheads, 96 percent of whom are men.

Can it be that the *Men's Journal* reader

really kayaks, climbs, cycles, and also golfs? With apartments too small for magazines, where will they keep the gear? Barely used Rollerblades now outnumber barely used waffle-irons at yard sales, testament to a new genre of good intentions. In America, where only 8 percent of men in one major study undertake regular "vigorous and intense activity," is *Men's Journal* pitching not to Hemingway but to Walter Mitty?

No matter.

Dreams are what

consumer magazines live on. To conjure the proper dreams, women's magazines brew a sweet-and-sour potion of self-doubt and eternally springing hope — they invent cellulite and spend the next decade curing it. But men grow up believing masculinity equals mastery — "action and accomplishment" — so their magazines must appeal to self-confidence, not self-hatred. Regarding a photo of an iron-thighed skier flying over a Mazda-sized mogul in *Men's Journal*, a male friend tells me men respond to it just as they would to a do-it-yourself whatsit in *Popular Mechanics*. "The guy might ski once a year," explains my informant, "but he thinks, I can do that! Next



premier edition. The cover was a sepia-toned black-and-white photo of a kayak on a high-cliffed beach, a lone man wading the surf.

"Men...want to understand and master their lives," they wrote, nodding to the New Introspector while wooing the just-do-it readers of *Tennis* and *Yachting*. "Traditionally, special-interest magazines have served these needs. But men today...don't have the time or the floor space to subscribe to lots of single-topic magazines." *Men's Journal* would offer this modern cross-trainer the word on basketball camp or skiing the Matterhorn — accoutred with the latest watches, helmets, and shoes.



## There are signs that Ed Kosner is bringing the hunter home from the hill and *Esquire* home from the sea

winter ..."

That's the fantasy, anyway. Luckily for publishers, masculinity is an *idea*, not a thing or an act, so "buying" even *Men's Journal's* death-defying brand of manliness requires no actual mogul-jumping. Its success (the bi-monthly went to ten issues in September) may not prove Wenner's contention that male Boomers are more apt to "climb a mountain" than "sit on a beach...and drink pina colodas." Rather, it may prove that an adventure magazine can draw what every publisher — and advertiser — wants: someone happy to sit in a chair, wearing Medalist underwear, Eddie Bauer cologne, and Seiko sports watch, and read. Masculine mastery — or, who cares? its semblance — may be ordered by phone with any major credit card and accomplished by proxy through the pages of a magazine.

Take the *Men's Journal* man, outfit him in Calvin Klein, add a fancy for literature and a propensity to pronounce judgment on women, drop him off between Montana and Manhattan, and dare him to collect a coherent identity — you've got Terry McDonell's *Esquire* reader, whom editors at *GQ* called "Irving Cowboy." (Kosner will doubtless retire Irving. In an interview for this article, he indicated that *Esquire* will speak to men and women who live "the third way," with neither "macho swagger" nor "feminist lunacy.")

McDonell's *Esquire* published fine

journalism — Robert Sam Anson on Max Frankel, Guy Martin on a young German Nazi — and was laced with urbane wit, as in Stanley Bing's workplace humor column, "Executive Summary." Yet the rough and ready tumbles onto even the style, food, and arts pages: furniture from Cody, Wyoming;



cowboy cuisine; and, on the occasion of the monumental Joan Miró exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, a piece on the artist's relationship with Hemingway.

*Esquire's* always high-quality fiction became increasingly redolent of deer and antelope, too, as more and more stories unfolded in Texas or Montana trailer parks and bus stations, featured alcoholic men and mistreated, leggy women, and were written by guys who live west of the Mississippi. When the magazine debuted Elizabeth Gilbert, a twenty-four-year old Lower East Side waitress and writer, what was her subject? A cowgirl!

"Girls" in these pages were mostly ogled, ridiculed, or patronized. In March '93, McDonell charmingly pitched the Ms. Foundation's "Take Our Daughters to Work" Day — in an issue without a single female byline. Typical coverage of women included Philip Weiss's long feature on models and Michael Angeli's "Last Pinup" of Demi Moore (wanna bet?), a breath-bating account in which the star undresses, the writer offers her \$500 to kiss him, and she declines. Except for Lynn Darling's occasional perspicacious survey of the sexual-political landscape, the magazine's most in-depth look at women has been "The Women We Love," which sometimes seemed to be written by a media-savvy jury of construction workers on lunch break.

While *GQ* and *Details* accommo-

date their reader's marriages, fatherhoods, and sex lives into their pages without breaking a sweat, *Esquire* has struck a man's-man stance and maintained it arduously, a guy hardening his abs and challenging everyone to punch him. Then, the magazine awarded a Dubious Achievement Award two years running to Fabio, spokesmodel of hyper-heterosexuality. Do the gentlemen protest too much?

So disintegrated was *Esquire* that last year it fugged into multiple personalities. One of these, *Esquire Sportsman*, an Orvis-clad *Field & Stream*, died fast. But *Esquire Gentleman*, a fashion book aiming to "blend the fabness of fashion



## *GQ* has achieved that balance of "fabness" and "regular-guy attitude" — code for gay and straight

with a kind of regular-guy attitude," as designer Roger Black put it, succeeded so smartly at what rival *GQ* had been doing all along that *Esquire* pulled it aboard as in a regular section in December, perhaps to act as a sort of advertising flotation device. It will also be published separately, twice this year.

There are other signs that Kosner is bringing the hunter home from the hill and *Esquire*'s editorial direction home from the sea. In the process, he has already civilized its dialogue with women. February's issue zooms in on "The 21st Century Fox," the next generation of feminists. Tad Friend makes an intelligent stab at the sexual-freedom/sexual-equality conundrum, and E. Jean Carroll (a woman) gives us an awesome profile of womanhood's future, embodied in the "rockingest girl" at Madison, Wisconsin's West High. There are irritating signs that these guys don't quite get it yet, which Ellen Goodman pins with her javelin-like summary of the magazine's poll of 1,000 eighteen-to-twenty-five-year-old women on money, power, sex, and men. "Note to the men who wrote the questions," she writes, in a sidebar to the poll. "Give us a break with these choices." Don't offer "strong but silent" or "in touch with his inner child," she instructs. How about strong but *not* silent? "These women are sure what they want from sex," she concludes, but "given the ridiculous choice between sex without hugs and hugs without sex, we'll take hugs. Because — surprise! — an encounter without hugs may be *Esquire*'s idea of sex, but it isn't ours."

The good news is, Goodman's on the page. The conversation has begun again.

*GQ* started life as a fashion magazine, and fashion has remained its keel. A decade ago, before editor-in-chief Art Cooper took over, the book was a curious cross between *Ladies' Home Jour-*

*nal* and *Mandate*, the front of the book gray with columns of type, the middle juicy with Bruce Weber photos of hunks under glaring Los Angeles light. *GQ* was perceived as a gay magazine, and one of Cooper's first tasks was to het it up. When he did so aggressively — adding, for instance, a starlet of the month — *The Advocate* denounced him for betraying the gay community. Now the magazine is firmly in the mainstream, appealing to "guys who expect to succeed within the establishment," Cooper says.

Is the mainstream straight? *GQ* tilts that way: relationship pieces are heterosexual oriented and sex adviser "Dr. Sooth" deals with vaginal warts and the Coital Alignment Technique, a recalibrated missionary position. Pieces on feminism come from the perspective of men intimate with women. But a report on RU-486, the "abortion pill," shares the July 1993 issue with "The Straight Queer," David Kamp's indictment of straights who borrow "AIDS chic" and skip the muck of being homosexual.

And then there is *GQ*'s devotion to fashion, which still retains a whiff of femininity. Cooper made intelligent decisions: adding babes without deleting cufflinks, running athlete profiles, aware that many readers buy their football jackets at Barney's. Fashion sense is the magazine's calling card, after all. Without it, why not read *Esquire*, with its tradition of good journalism?

Not to say that *GQ*'s journalism isn't good. It is. Along with the requisite flavor-of-the-month celebrities — Shaquille O'Neal, Liam Neeson — it profiles Al Sharpton and Christopher Drogoul, the Atlanta bank manager whom some see as the Bush administration's scapegoat in Iraqgate. And Cooper regularly runs features of 5,000 to 7,000 words on untrendy subjects — Daniel D'Ambrosio's coverage of a violent feud over gambling at the Mohawk Akwesasne reservation, for example, or

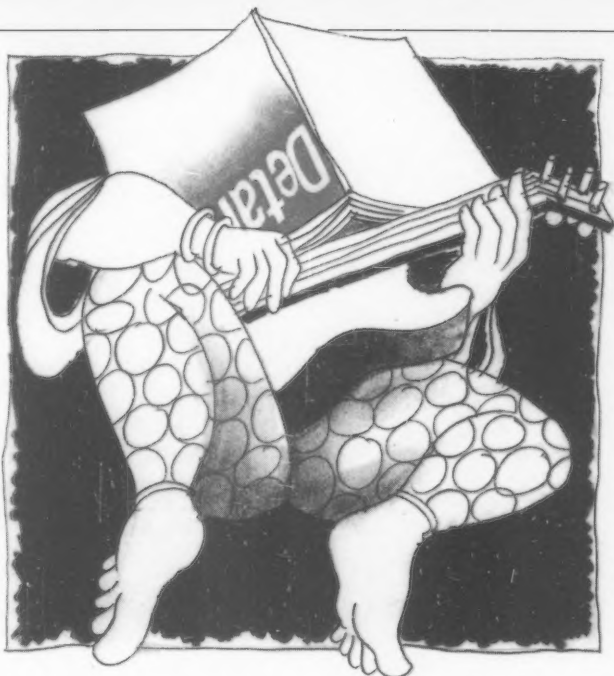
Mary A. Fischer's investigation of a 1980s Justice Department "witch hunt" against black politicians. The *GQ* reader, one infers, is hip but not fidgety; he is a man who sits still to consider serious issues — culture, money, power.

*GQ* has achieved Roger Black's ideal balance of "fabness" and "regular-guy attitude" — code for gay and straight — by assuming that whatever their sexual preference, men want to look good, feel good, read good writing, and have good relationships. So a reader is not discomfited to find, pages away from a fetching Sarah Jessica Parker, a spread headlined "Animal Magnetism," featuring a smoldering Stephen Rea, the actor who plays the straight man in love with a drag queen in *The Crying Game*. Whether he identifies with Rea or lusts after him, the *GQ* man is the thoroughly masculine 1990s urbanite: chic, fit, informed, sexually sure of himself.

Like *GQ*, *Details* aims to be sexually "nondenominational," according to editor-in-chief James Truman, and, to some extent, it succeeds. (On April 1 Truman becomes Condé Nast's editorial director; John Leland takes his place at *Details*.) Fashionwise, the *Details* reader is as butch or swish as he wishes, in lemon-yellow suit, torn jeans, battered leather overcoat, or plaid high-tops. "My dad was a football player and my mom was homecoming queen, and I've always tried to be a little of both," says a commercial artist modeling a Smurf-colored polyester suit. As to fitness, the get-up-early challenges found in *Men's Journal* would elicit a firm "Not" from most *Details* readers, who burn calories by staying up late: 90 percent go to nightclubs, compared with 20 percent of adult Americans. Health tips are relevant — "Hangover Helpers: Morning-After Cures of the Stars."

But this reader of nonchalant gender receives a subliminal message from





*Details* — or from its major subject, pop music celebrities, most of whom are male and a significant number of whom appear to be intoxicant-pickled, mildly talented overage teenagers who think they ejaculate manna. “I’d get hammered and meet these chicks and I couldn’t remember what they looked like,” says Sean-E of the Ex-Idols, a Guns N’ Roses look-alike. “I’d come home shit-faced and scribble in my book ‘Pretty nice. Kinda sweet-looking, but it was dark. Tattoo on left tittie. Bought me a beer. Threw up in her car.’”

Not everybody in the pop-music world is dopey and sexist and, to be fair, *Details*’s editorial pitch in reporting on jerks like Sean-E is often a major third above the mayhem. The magazine assigns gay British pop star Holly Johnson to write on being HIV-positive; it covers the women of pop; and Anka Radakovich prowls the between-the-sheets beat with gleeful lubricity and feminist good sense.

Truman says hiring a woman to cover sex mitigates the “locker room” tendencies of men’s magazines, but such sexually progressive intentions may be lost on his readers: one sent Anka his used jockstrap. Meanwhile, throughout the pages, women are “girls,” and penis references, by sheer number, transmit their tiresome message in spite of the irony that often sheathes them.

A close read of *Details* reveals a catholic sensibility. International reporting is astute and textured, like a piece on Siberia’s shamans and another on the Kaiapó chief, a leader in the fight to save the Brazilian rain forest, who activists say is being framed for a brutal rape. The magazine hits and runs a lot, with quick takes on cocaine smuggling, dead eagles, circumcision — the result,

maybe, of attempting the oxymoronic: to produce a print product for the MTV generation. That goal may also explain the book’s only prolixity: those indistinguishable band-on-tour stories.

When a magazine gives itself to celebrating pop music, it is a tricky business not to celebrate the wanking masculinity of pop’s denizens. When it devotes itself to a frenetic pursuit of the just-about-to-be-new, it shrinks its ability to take stock of much more than the just-got-old, and assumes the perspective of an adolescent: world-weariness on top of naiveté.

In the end, *Details* is a little like the twenty-something men who read it: smart, hip, and handsome, but it tries to act more grown up than it really is.

Gendered assumptions shape the men’s books at my newsstand. Men like sports, war, and tits; women are interested in love and beauty. Women read for fun and self-improvement; men read in order to do something. That’s why so many men’s publications resemble user’s manuals more than journals. But as women run companies and marathons, that old gender dichotomy, active/masculine vs. passive/feminine, is wobbling, and the general-interest men’s magazines are wobbling with it. *Esquire* is the Marlboro Man on one page, Jerry Seinfeld on the next.

As to sexual politics, these magazines are equally in flux — or in trouble. Although both *Esquire* and *GQ* count as many as a third of their readers female, a men’s magazine by definition excludes women, which can exacerbate alienation and antipathy. Like the women’s magazines, which often subtly represent men as both white knight and useless brute, the men’s publications rhapsodize over their featured

gals as they hunker in male defense during an era of sexual power struggles. Even *GQ*, with a gender-balanced stable of writers and subjects, can’t bring itself wholeheartedly to endorse feminism. Nicholas Lemann’s encomium to liberated women is followed some months later by Harry Stein’s conversion to anti-feminism.

The magazines may have an easier time making room for homosexuals than making peace with women. Where they are fashionable or vain, they can’t escape feminine associations; *GQ* doesn’t even try. When they’re club-hopping, in *Details*, gender-bending is the rage. (Depeche Mode’s Martin Gore wears a skirt occasionally; RuPaul, always). Even when they’re jocks, as in *Men’s Journal*, their world is homosocial.

When it comes to tinkering with the rules of gender, publishers consider extreme caution good sense. No one really knows if such rigidity keeps circulations as high, or as low, as they are. Still, the culture works on magazines as they work on it, and today’s more androgynous man has begun to see himself in the men’s magazines. Like a juggler who keeps a chainsaw, a laptop computer, and a silk scarf in the air, he sometimes looks ridiculous doing it, but he is skillfully performing an ancient art while transforming it into something new. ♦



# NHK TV J A

In December 1990 the most powerful man in Japanese broadcasting went on the offensive. His target: American domination of international television. In a speech at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, Keiji Shima, the chairman of Japan's largest television network, singled out Ted Turner for CNN's incursion into Asian skies.

"I don't mean to bad-mouth Mr. Turner, but CNN is trying to force U.S. news on the rest of the world," Shima said. The unusually blunt chairman of Japan's public network went on to criticize all American networks for belittling the Pacific: "When Asian news is treated by Western broadcasters, it tends to be given a low priority."

It was time for Japan to take the lead in bringing Asian news to the rest of the

world, he said, and NHK was going to create a global network to compete with CNN.

The ambitiousness of the scheme was surprising to me, sitting in the audience. Shima was my boss. I had been hired six months earlier to begin what had been billed as a modest experiment in English-language broadcasting, to test whether NHK — the initials stand for Nippon Hoso Kyokai, or Japan Broadcasting Corporation — could produce daily news programming that was acceptable to a Western audience. It was a reasonable gamble, considering NHK's enormous technical and financial resources and its attempt to forge closer relationships with the world's other major broadcasters.

The idea Shima outlined in his speech was to join together an American network, a European broadcaster, and NHK to cover the globe twenty-four hours a day with eight-hour shifts each in Tokyo, New York, and Europe. It was an audacious plan coming from a

company known abroad, when it was known at all, for being the most stodgy network in Japan.

Coproductions between NHK and foreign broadcasters had often dissolved when both sides saw the gulf between Japanese and Western journalism as too great to cross in the often contentious and always frenzied environment of television production. But Shima decided it was time for the 15,000 employees of NHK to make the leap. He would bring Japanese and Western journalists together to create a new kind of multicultural reporting that would deepen international understanding of Asia. Looked at from the top down, it seemed like a good theory. The reality in the trenches, as I quickly learned, was different.

I was the first non-Japanese ever hired at NHK to create and produce daily English-language programs for international distribution. *Japan Business Today*, the flagship program, was seen on NHK in Japan, CNBC in the

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# JAPAN

East meets West in the newsroom.  
An inside view of what happened  
when Japan's biggest network decided  
to compete with CNN

*by Spencer Sherman*

United States, Sky Channel in England, and Superchannel across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

I was drawn to the idea of working with Japanese journalists, mostly because, as a foreign correspondent, I was tired of always getting beaten by local media. The idea of combining Japanese access to information and Western production know-how seemed unbeatable. I was given editorial control of the programming directly from Chairman Shima.

#### **Learning a new set of rules**

On my first day at NHK a Japanese producer asked what was the most important quality of an American reporter.

"If I had to choose one," I remember saying, "it would be inquisitiveness."

I posed the same question back to him and, after a long pause, he said, "Patience" — with no detectable trace of irony.

In one way he was right. At the

beginning of an experiment in grafting American and Japanese journalism it was necessary to be patient. So I made accommodations I never would have considered making in the West. I didn't challenge Japanese producers when they left out the name of a Japanese man who paid more than \$28,000 in reparations to United Airlines for making a bomb threat. They insisted he was "quite humble" because of previous publicity.

There were other conventions that rankled me and many of the thirteen foreign producers and reporters hired for the business programming unit. Bowing at the end of an interview and giving the subject a small present; submitting all interview questions in advance to the person to be interviewed or being scolded by NHK colleagues for straying from the agreed-upon agenda; giving editorial decision-making to the oldest member of a team, even if he happened to be the cameraman. I told my foreign staff to ignore many of

these conventions, but to go along with those essential for reporting the news.

I was bemused by NHK's news agenda, which was skewed by the unending calendar of seasonal festivals across the island nation, excruciating hours of talking heads, and soft documentaries about Japan's beautiful places. Because so many of NHK's resources were allocated to this kind of news, it was not easy to fill an all-business program in a country that prided itself on being the world's second-most powerful economic engine. That was the first hint that the news agenda at NHK was being shaped in accordance with a set of standards not usually present in the newsrooms of America's television networks.

#### **When news is not news**

Corporate news was more concerned with product innovations than consumer protection or business malfeasance. When Japan's largest brokerage house — Nomura — decided to lay off



workers for the first time ever, NHK refused to report the story. The head of the network's stock market reporting team explained that "NHK won't single out Nomura" since the entire industry was suffering.

But NHK did single out Nomura for special treatment in July 1991. When high-ranking executives of the company were arrested for agreeing to make up losses for major clients, NHK agreed to let Nomura out of its commitment to provide daily stock market commentary. Executives said they acted to "punish" Nomura. But the effect was to allow the company to avoid answering questions about the scandal. Japanese producers blocked my attempts to get Nomura back on the air, relenting only when the scandal subsided.

NHK producers often took it upon themselves to decide whether a subject or individual was worthy to appear on TV. One person deemed unworthy was an employee of Fuji Bank who had written a book about the life of a Japanese "salaryman." In it, he criticized Fuji Bank for its treatment of employees. Managers, he said, often told employees to "work until you urinate blood" in an effort to bolster company profits. It was a natural story for *Japan Business Today*, but managing editor Masahiro Ohta insisted that we get "cooperation" from Fuji Bank. When I asked what that meant, he said the bank must agree to participate in the story.

"When they say, 'We must get cooperation,' that means the story is dead," a young Japanese producer warned me.

As the weeks wore on, Ohta found different reasons for delaying the story. "He doesn't speak English," Ohta said of the book's author. We had four translators working in our office.

A week later: "We cannot confirm what he has written about." We hadn't tried.

Two weeks later: "He sounds like a troublemaker." The story died.



**U.S. viewers saw graphic NHK footage of Bush's Tokyo-dinner illness before NHK dared to air it at home.**

in Japan and only shown overseas.

### When push comes to shove

As the differences between Japanese and Western producers became more apparent, it was easy to lose sight of similarities. "I would say that 90 percent of what we put on the air was equal to what you would get in the United States," says Kevin Smith, who now works for the PBS program *Nightly Business Report* in Los Angeles. "There was sometimes 10 percent that was somewhat questionable in terms of withholding information or, more frequently, pulling punches. It was that 10 percent that made me uncomfortable."

Smith, an aggressive reporter, often drew puzzled looks and embarrassed laughter from his Japanese producers. When he pushed too far, they blindsided him. On a story about alternative energy sources, Smith learned how far

The pressure to keep stories about Japan's minority groups off the air is even greater. Reporter Kevin Smith stunned editors at one meeting when he suggested a story on how U.S. trade pressure to open Japan's leather market would hurt the *burakumin*, a minority considered ethnically Japanese but held in the same low regard as untouchables in India. Many *burakumin* work in the meat and leather industries.

At first, one Japanese producer said the story was too sensitive. That only piqued the interest of the Western reporters. So senior producer Hitoshi Imaizumi said to the group of slack-jawed Westerners that the government did not recognize minority groups in Japan, and, furthermore, that to call attention to minority groups would only make their situation worse. The pregnant pause that followed was finally filled by another NHK producer, who suggested the story be aired during the then-upcoming Barcelona Olympics, when the program would be preempted





## At NHK, the reflex is, when push comes to shove, to be pushed and shoved before reporting a story, especially about the government

his Japanese producer would go to keep controversial information off the air. The producer ordered a translator to expunge any references to nuclear energy when translating an interview into English for Smith, who did not speak Japanese. Knowing that the producer wanted to ignore the nuclear energy issue, Smith doublechecked the original interview with another translator. Confronted with the deleted material, the producer included it in the final story.

But NHK has some reporters who are committed to getting the news out and who will go to great lengths to do so when they are thwarted by their own organization. The most memorable example of this occurred during President Bush's January 1992 visit to Japan. As the world soon learned, Bush became ill during a state dinner and collapsed onto the floor, but not before vomiting into the lap of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa. An enterprising NHK cameraman had ignored orders to keep his camera off, and recorded the event.

NHK was in a tight spot, because it had agreed not to videotape the dinner. It ran a heavily edited version of the tape, which it then released, saying it was complete. Only after *The Washington Post* reported that the most graphic portions of the tape had been cut did NHK admit it had the complete tape, and only after ABC News obtained a copy and ran more of the tape did NHK follow suit, saying the tape had already been broadcast by ABC News.

How did ABC News get the tape? The truth is known only to a few producers in NHK and ABC, but one plausible answer is that someone inside the Japanese network who wanted the complete story known supplied a copy to the American network. It is a scenario often played out at the network when controversial topics are involved.

Just before Bush arrived in Tokyo a similar incident occurred at *Japan Busi-*

*ness Today*. The speaker of Japan's lower house of Parliament, Yoshi Sakurauchi, made a speech in far-western Japan in which he called American workers lazy. Our Japanese news editors stonewalled the story all the next day, but finally, at my insistence, cobbled together enough information to report the story on *Asia Business Now*, a show we produced for ABC News. The following day NHK ran the story, quoting ABC.

This contortion of the editorial process is often a result of *gaiatsu*, or "foreign pressure," generated by NHK when needed. While NHK did not want to offend Bush or Sakurauchi, it could force itself into running the story if a foreign broadcaster ran it, even if that broadcaster was running an NHK story secondhand.

Of course, the editing of the George Bush tape is not as black and white as it may seem. ABC News also edited out some of the more vivid scenes of the president vomiting on the prime minister. Both American and Japanese producers made editorial judgments. The difference is in the editorial reflex. At NHK, that reflex is, when push comes to shove, to be pushed and shoved before reporting a story. This is particularly true in reporting on the Japanese government.

### Don't bite the hand that funds you

In August 1992, a political story rocked the nation. In a startling break from the tradition of soft-pedaling on government corruption, a competing network, Tokyo Broadcasting System, reported that many of Japan's most powerful politicians had taken money from a package delivery service known as Sagawa Kyubin, which was widely reported to be connected to the Japanese mob. It was one of the revelations that would later lead to the unprecedented indictment of political

boss Shin Kanemaru and the disgrace and fall from power of Japan's ruling party. NHK had no immediate report on the subject. When I asked why, managing editor Masahiro Ohta said, "You know NHK's *seijibu* [political desk] reporters. They will be the last to report this. You know how they are."

NHK is in a difficult position. It is a public television network, supported nearly 100 percent by a government-imposed user fee on every television set in Japan. Because of that system, the government plays a potent advisory role at the network. The prime minister appoints the board of governors, who in turn appoint the chairman of the network. The NHK budget is vetted by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and must be approved by Japan's parliament.

When a political story is edited at NHK, the editing booth is always crowded by the ghosts of bureaucrats, ministers, and ruling and opposition party politicians who may be offended. The 1991 Tokyo gubernatorial election was a good example. The election was a referendum on Governor Shunichi Suzuki and his pet project, the new Tokyo City Hall, a controversial skyscraper that cost more than a billion dollars. His major opponents were calling it Suzuki's "Tax Tower."

A report prepared by one of our Western correspondents, Janice Fuhrman, focused on Suzuki and his main rival in the election, Hisanori Iso-mura, a former NHK anchor. During editing, she was told that election laws required all twenty-one gubernatorial candidates to be included in the story.

"It seemed absurd to include twenty-one candidates when most of them had nothing to do with the topic of the piece, which was City Hall," Fuhrman recalled recently. "I was finally able to finish editing by adding footage of the candidates from the two other major





## Japanese journalists I know believe American journalists live in what one calls a culture of abandonment

parties. Even that wasn't relevant to my story. But I agreed to compromise."

But one senior Japanese producer still was not satisfied with the bicultural compromise. He complained to managing editor Yoshinori Imai thirty minutes before the broadcast.

"No one could say for sure whether we were breaking the law, some journalistic convention, NHK policy, or just the whims of one of our Japanese editors. So we stood by the story," Fuhrman said. (In the interest of full disclosure, I should point out that Fuhrman is now my wife.)

The compromise held and the piece was broadcast. Later, I was told that the Japanese backed down because they figured NHK executives would be too busy to watch the program.

Because of Japan's militaristic history in Asia, NHK reporters are deeply concerned about the reaction of important foreign governments to their reports. *Japan Business Today*, for example, was forced to revamp an entire graphic design when senior Japanese editors said the Taiwan flag could not appear on NHK because it might offend Chinese leaders in Beijing. An American reporter, Douglas Williams, was asked while writing a script about the Taiwan stock market to refrain from using "government officials" or "leaders of Taiwan" to avoid offending the mainland government.

In May 1992, after months of planning, a week-long series of shows from Thailand was postponed because of bloody pro-democracy riots in the streets there. It was a unanimous decision, based on the safety of the staff and the shared belief that doing business programming during such a tense political moment was inappropriate. When calm was restored a few months later, the project was revived.

But then strange directives began appearing. First, the week-long series

was cut back to three days. Then the focus of the program was changed from Thailand to the Association of South East Asian Nations, or ASEAN. Questions were asked about moving the program to Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. Finally, after weeks of negotiations, we decided to broadcast the program for three days from Bangkok, Thailand's capital. But top NHK executives insisted that critical reports about the country be surrounded by other reports from ASEAN, and the most critical report — on AIDS in Thailand — was removed from the series. It finally aired separately. The reason for this micromanagement was made clear in a heated editorial meeting on the broadcast.

"We have good relations with Thailand," said Masahiro Ohta, managing editor of *Japan Business Today*. The "we" he was talking about was not NHK, but Japan.

### Over and out

When Keiji Shima was ousted as chairman of NHK in July 1991, *Mainichi Shimbun* asked, "Is it the end of *perestroika* at NHK?" The newspaper went on to say that NHK had not been ready to accept Shima's challenge. Five months later, NHK's new chairman, Mikio Kawaguchi, announced that the Global News Network was dead, although "we are going to keep the concept and the spirit of the project alive."

"You are safe for a while from interference," said a senior NHK producer, one of the few who privately sympathized with the American journalists. "That's because they've spent so many millions on it. Just as it took a long time to build, it will take a while to shut it down."

But finally it became clear that the era of editorial *perestroika* was coming to an end. Two and a half years into producing *Japan Business Today*, my co-executive producer, Kenichi Endo,

said it was time to make some changes. The style and pacing of the programming should remain Western, he said, but the editorial content must begin to follow NHK rules. And those are hard rules for an American-trained journalist to follow. I left NHK soon after that conversation.

Most Japanese journalists live in what I have come to call a culture of censorship, where constant concern about their role in society leads them to hide shocking or unpleasant news, particularly about powerful institutions and corporations. Japanese journalists I know believe American reporters live in what one calls a culture of abandonment, by which they mean we refuse to consider the effect our reporting has on our society — a belief for which they cite much evidence, particularly the American media's preoccupation with, if not glorification of, violence.

When Japanese and Americans work together, they tend to call editorial conflicts "misunderstandings" or "technical differences." But that belittles the problems facing journalists from different cultures. Most important conflicts between journalists from East and West are not shallow misunderstandings about terms of art, but reflect deep differences in the way they see their role in society.

If I learned anything from my time working inside Japan's media giant it was that, while video images purport to reflect facts, they are actually highly malleable, subject to the cultural, political, and social backgrounds, biases, and prejudices of the camera crews, reporters, producers, and editors who fashion them for broadcast. TV journalists and viewers should keep this in mind as cooperation among broadcasters across the globe continues to expand and we lose track of who has collected and edited the images we see. ♦



## THE MEDIA & ME

# THE RADIATION STORY NO ONE WOULD TOUCH

BY GEOFFREY SEA

Suddenly, at the close of 1993, the public was bombarded with "news" about the feeding of radioactive substances to pregnant women and mentally retarded students, about the unethical irradiation of workers, soldiers, medical patients, and prison inmates, and about the government's own internal fears that these experiments had "a little of the Buchenwald touch." But the story that appeared in *The Albuquerque Tribune* (circulation: 35,000) on November 15-17, and was then projected into the national headlines by the forthright admissions and initiatives of Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary, was hardly new.

By 1984, activists and researchers across the country were systematically investigating the human experimentation program and attempting to bring it to public attention. By 1986, documentation of the program was massive, solid, and publicly available.

I am among those who persistently tried to get national media coverage of

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this outrageous example of government wrongdoing. To say that the media were reluctant to listen would be an understatement. The fact is that, for more than a decade, documentation was ignored and facts were misreported.

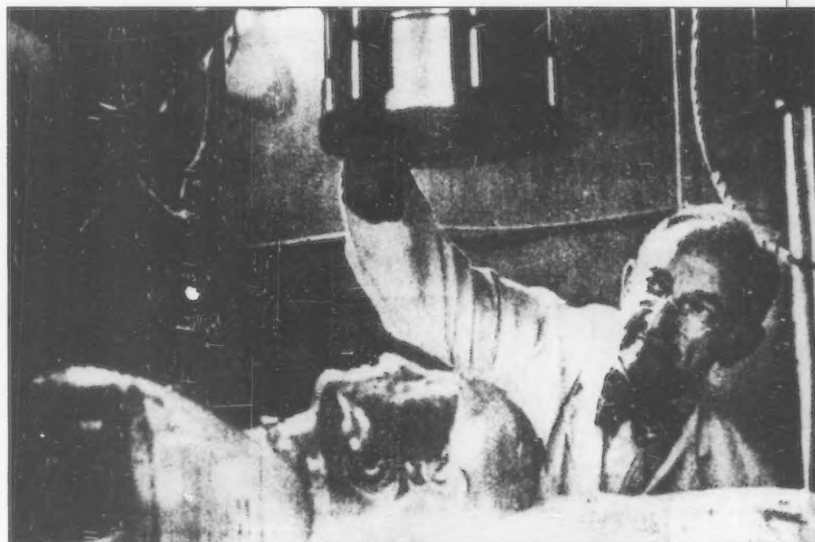
What follows is a chronology of significant events in the strange history of this important story — one that began to receive adequate coverage only after almost all the victims were dead and most of the perpetrators retired:

**1971:** *The Washington Post* reveals that a research team at the University of Cincinnati, under the leadership of Eugene Saenger, has been irradiating

patients "benefit" from the radiation exposure, despite the fact that the radiation far exceeds recommended therapeutic doses, that the treatments are not intended to have a therapeutic effect, and that, in Saenger's own estimation, eight patient deaths could possibly be attributed to the "treatments."

**1972:** The researchers quietly end their experiments when evidence of harmful effects begins to mount. After a cursory review by the American College of Radiology, no one bothers to reopen the case for public scrutiny. No attempt is made to monitor the health of the surviving experimental subjects.

**1975:** Following revelations of army-



"mentally enfeebled" patients — all of them poor and most of them black — at dose rates known to have harmful effects. The aim of the research, funded by the Department of Defense: to discover whether and under what conditions soldiers on an atomic battlefield would be cognitively impaired.

A review panel is established at the University of Cincinnati. However, the ethical issues are subordinated to the relatively technical question of the mechanism for obtaining consent. The experiments continue. No one seems to consider the obvious ethical problem involved in extracting "informed consent" from patients selected because of their "low-educational level ... low-functioning intelligence quotient ... and strong evidence of cerebral organic deficit." The researchers claim that the

**Dr. Eugene Saenger (above) headed a research team at the University of Cincinnati that, until 1972, conducted radiation experiments on humans for the Department of Defense. The DOD wanted to find out how irradiated troops might function on the battlefield. When *The Washington Post* broke the story in 1971, Dr. Saenger was quoted as saying, "It is my belief ... that this is a helpful way of treating patients." Here he demonstrates his technique, using a dummy, or "phantom," that contains sophisticated radiation detectors.**

sponsored LSD experiments, Senator Edward Kennedy chairs hearings on human experimentation funded by the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. Radiation experiments, however, are not mentioned either in the hearings or in media coverage.



**1976:** *Science Trends*, a newsletter published in the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., reveals an experiment carried out in San Francisco, Chicago, and Rochester, New York, as part of the Manhattan Project, that "involved the injection of relatively massive quantities of bomb-grade plutonium into the veins of 18 men, women, and children." The article implies that the experiment was an isolated historical case, and concludes: "Whether injecting the key ingredient of the atomic bomb into unsuspecting patients can be equated with Nazi wartime experiments is a matter which is today considered moot."

**1981:** The case of Dwayne Sexton, irradiated as a child as part of NASA-sponsored research aimed at discovering the potential effects of radiation exposure on astronauts, gains fleeting attention when the mother of the child links the death of her son to the experiments. *Mother Jones* runs a cover story on the Sexton case. Albert Gore, then a young congressman from Tennessee, where the experiments had taken place, follows up with hearings on the Oak Ridge Total Body Irradiation Program. Neither the article nor the hearings links the Sexton case with the Saenger experiments or with the broader program of human experimentation with radiation.

**Early-1980s:** A network of activist-researchers starts to compile the full and extensive record of U.S. radiation experiments on humans.

•In Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. David Egilman of the Greater Cincinnati Occupational Health Center and I are investigating experiments conducted on nuclear workers and following the trail of the Saenger experiments. At the time, I am employed as a health consultant by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union and the Fernald Atomic Trades and Labor Council. The unions are concerned about the intentional radioactive contamination of workers' skin as a means of testing external cleansing agents and about the continuing use of workers as experimental subjects in the development of chelation drugs to treat internal exposure to radioactive heavy metals.

In the course of pressing claims for worker's compensation, we discover that the AEC/DOE has secretly con-

## At each of the last three press conferences — in 1985 and 1986 — Hamilton's "Buchenwald memo" is released to the press, but no mainstream paper mentions it

tracted with local hospitals and coroners for the collection of fluid and tissue samples, surgically removed organs, and autopsy specimens — in some cases, whole cadavers of atomic workers. Some of these specimens are being taken and destroyed by the government, often without the knowledge or against the expressed wishes of the workers and/or their survivors.

We suspect that this "body-snatching" program serves a dual purpose: it helps the government accumulate data for military purposes, while at the same time it results in the destruction of physical evidence that could support compensation claims. Finally, we are concerned that Dr. Saenger has become the chief consultant and expert witness for the government in defending itself and its contractors against liability suits.

•In California, Dorothy Legarreta, who had worked on the Manhattan Project as a laboratory technician, organizes the National Association of Radiation Survivors (NARS) and starts to write a book about human experimentation. In 1982, while examining the papers of Joseph Hamilton — the scientist in charge of radiation experiments at the University of California — at the library of the University of California at Berkeley, she comes across a 1950 memo written to Shields Warren, then director of the Atomic Energy Commission's Division of Biology and Medicine. The memo advised that large primates — chimpanzees, for example — be substituted for humans in the planned studies on

radiation's cognitive effects (the very same program of experimentation that Dr. Saenger was to execute). The use of humans, Hamilton wrote, might leave the AEC open "to considerable criticism," since the experiments as proposed had "a little of the Buchenwald touch."

After Legarreta finds the so-called Buchenwald memo, Hamilton's papers are removed from public access by University of California administrators. Soon after this, Legarreta files a Freedom of Information Act request with the Department of Energy, asking for all documents concerning experiments in which humans were intentionally exposed to radioactive materials through injection or ingestion. Later that year, NARS receives a two-foot-high carton of documents in response — documents that, for the first time, expose the widespread human experimentation program of the U.S. government.

•In Missouri, Dotte Troxell is trying to document her own horrific experience and to demonstrate the bonds that unite all experiment survivors. In 1957, while working at the AEC's Kansas City plant, run by Bendix, she had been involved in a serious radiation accident. When the symptoms of acute radiation syndrome began appearing (hair loss, nausea, purpura, and hemorrhaging), she was sent to the Lovelace Clinic in New Mexico, a clinic established by the AEC for developing treatments for radiation injury. Because Troxell was thought to be near death, and presumably because she had been exposed to a Cobalt-60 calibration source that allowed the dose to her organs to be precisely determined, the doctors at Lovelace did exploratory surgery on her, probably to obtain tissue biopsies from her internal organs. When she awoke from surgery and asked what had been done to her, the doctors said they could not tell her for "national security" reasons. After suffering radiogenic cataracts in both eyes and giving birth to a son with congenital diabetes, Troxell founds VOTE: Victims and Veterans Opposed to Technological Experimentation.

•In Knoxville, Tennessee, Clifford T. Honicker and Jacqueline Kittrell are investigating the human experimen-



tion program at the DOE's nuclear complex at Oak Ridge. They locate and begin to analyze the papers of Stafford Warren, who had been medical director of the Manhattan Project and who subsequently directed the Oak Ridge medical program. Those of Warren's papers that are obtained, including classified documents and medico-legal files, provide a clear picture of the origins of the government's human experimentation program, as well as of the government's policy of denying compensation to radiation survivors. Honicker and Kittrell found the Radiation Research Project, which later becomes the American Environmental Health Studies Project.

**Mid-1980s:** Our network has accumulated enough documentation on the human experimentation program to go public. We do so at press conferences held in Cincinnati (November 1984), Knoxville (May 1985), Kansas City (May 1986), and Berkeley (July 1986). At each of the last three conferences, Hamilton's Buchenwald memo is released to the press, but no mainstream paper mentions it.

**1985-86:** In contract talks, the labor council representing workers at the DOE's Fernald, Ohio, uranium plant demands disclosure of all human studies involving uranium and plutonium, as well as information about toxic releases to the environment, use of atomic workers as experimental subjects, and the body-snatching program. Rather than release this information to the labor council, DOE officials contact the AFL-CIO leadership and threaten to close the plant if labor will not honor its "national security obligations." Frank Martino, president of the International Chemical Workers Union, writes to Paul Burnsky, president of the AFL-CIO Metal Trades Department, calling for an end to "continued efforts to represent the community" — a reference to the council's attempt to obtain information from the DOE through collective bargaining. The unions back off on their demand for information and abruptly terminate my employment. Dr. Egilman is instructed to stop all radiation-related work. He chooses instead to resign.

Dr. Egilman and I decide that now is the time to take everything we have and give it to *The New York Times*. Dr. Egilman gives the Buchenwald memo

## The 1986 Markey report, which contains all the relevant facts that would be treated as major revelations seven years later, results in minor and often misleading news stories

to *Times* reporter Matthew Wald, a college acquaintance. But no article appears in 1985, and there is no word from the *Times*. I contact *Times* reporter Stuart Diamond, describe the outlines of the story, arrange a meeting, assemble a stack of documents, and fly to New York. Diamond and I meet at a restaurant at La Guardia Airport. After reviewing the documents, including the Buchenwald memo, he says he will come to Ohio and look into the story.

On January 28, 1986, the date of Diamond's intended arrival, I am working at my desk with the television turned on but the sound off, as I often do. I am distracted at one point by a striking picture on the TV screen: a beautiful white plume of smoke unfurling against the azure sky. It is the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. Within the hour Diamond calls to say that he will be investigating the Challenger disaster — and thus won't be coming to Ohio any time soon. He tells me to wait until he's done with the Challenger story. I wait for three months.

On April 26, the number three unit at the Chernobyl nuclear energy station explodes, and melts down. Diamond leaves to cover the accident. I leave Cincinnati and head for Kansas City, where, on May 5, Dotte Troxell and I hold a press conference. We say that U.S. criticism of Soviet secrecy on Chernobyl is hypocritical and call on the U.S. government to release all data on human experimentation. In our press release we attack the credibility of Dr.

Saenger — who has quickly been hired to advise the U.S. government on Chernobyl's impact on U.S. personnel stationed in Europe and has become the media's authority on Chernobyl's health effects. Our press release also details the U.S. human experimentation program "that has, at various times, included the exposure of prisoners, mental patients, terminal cancer patients, and paid volunteers to 'non-therapeutic' radiation doses ...." Again, we show the Buchenwald memo to the press. The press responds with silence.

A number of us start working our congressional contacts. Cliff Honicker, Dorothy Legarreta, and I all had a close working relationship with the House Subcommittee on Energy Conservation and Power when it had been under the chairmanship of Representative Richard Ottinger of New York. Near the end of his tenure, Ottinger had authorized a full-scale staff investigation into the DOE's human experimentation program.

By 1986 chairmanship of the subcommittee has passed to Edward Markey of Massachusetts. Eager to see some result of the investigation, we press the subcommittee to go public in hearings and a report. No hearings are held — a curious fact given the magnitude of the issue — but in October the staff issues its report, "American Nuclear Guinea Pigs: Three Decades of Radiation Experiments on U.S. Citizens." Markey simultaneously issues a press release that states: "The purpose of several experiments was actually to cause injury to the subjects .... American citizens thus became nuclear calibration devices for experimenters run amok."

The Markey report, which contains all the relevant facts that would be treated as major revelations seven years later, results in minor and often misleading news stories in several papers. *The New York Times's* Matthew Wald extracts a single strand from the ninety-five-page report — news that some of the releases of radioactive iodine from the Hanford, Washington, nuclear facility had been intentional — and turns it into a story that runs on page A-20. The other ninety-plus pages of the report, which deal with unethical clinical



experiments, are downplayed in a small, unbylined piece headed VOLUNTEERS AROUND U.S. SUBMITTED TO RADIATION. Contrary to the Markey report and to fact, the headline and article imply that all subjects had volunteered for the experiments and that they knew they were subjected to radiation. Neither article mentions the Buchenwald memo.

Of all the papers that come to our attention, only *The Daily Californian*, the student newspaper at the University of California at Berkeley, points up the Buchenwald memo. In a piece titled "At Buchenwald and Berkeley," editor-in-chief Howard Levine quotes from the November 28, 1950, memo by Dr. Hamilton and incisively criticizes reporting on the Markey report by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *The New York Times*. Both papers, he writes, "minimized the gross inhumanity of these tests by downplaying their scope and ignoring the fact that most of the experiments were conducted without the 'informed consent' demanded by the Nuremberg protocols of 1946-47."

**1987:** Eileen Welsome of *The Albuquerque Tribune* starts looking into the plutonium-injection experiment, after coming across a footnote about it in a report on animal experimentation at the Air Force Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico.

**1988:** Dorothy Legarreta is killed in a mysterious car crash, reminiscent of the death of Karen Silkwood. Legarreta's briefcase — listed on the accident report as being found — is missing. The tow-truck driver says that the solid aluminum case was discarded because it was badly damaged, though such an action would be against the law. I was working with Legarreta just prior to her death and know that her briefcase contained a file titled "hot docs" — formerly secret documents that she and I had culled from government papers obtained through a class action lawsuit by veterans who had been intentionally exposed to atomic blasts and radiation while in the service.

**1989:** On November 19, *The New York Times Magazine* publishes an article by Cliff Honicker titled "The Hidden Files." The subtitle reads: "In 1946, a Nuclear Accident Killed One Scientist and Injured Several Others.

The Government Response to That Tragedy Established a Pattern of Secrecy That Still Exists." Based in large part on the files Honicker had discovered five years earlier, the closely focused article does not deal with the government's years-long human experimentation program and its origins.

**1991:** *60 Minutes* airs a segment on the government's body-snatching program. In his introduction to the January 13 segment, Harry Reasoner says: "In the case of the men and women who have worked in this country's nuclear-weapons industry, the government is apparently willing to go to any lengths to defeat workers' claims that they were injured or killed by exposure to radiation — any lengths, including falsifying records, concealing evidence, even trying to steal human remains ...." Oddly, according to the segment's producer, one of the most powerful interviews — with a courier who arranges for the shipment of body parts to Los Alamos and who was present at a secret autopsy at which body parts were removed without the knowledge or consent of the family — winds up on the cutting room floor.

Meanwhile, Jackie Kittrell and Cliff Honicker have been combing the hills of Tennessee, trying to track down women who, while pregnant, had been unwitting subjects in radioisotope ingestion studies decades earlier. Since some of the initial recruitment for the experiments had been through classified ads placed in newspapers in remote Appalachian towns, Jackie and Cliff try, repeatedly, to get the same papers to run articles describing the experiments and asking the women to come forward on a confidential basis. They try to persuade the *Nashville Tennessean* to run such articles because one of the largest experiments, involving more than 800 pregnant women, took place at Vanderbilt University, in Nashville. At least one reporter — Carolyn Shoulders at *The Tennessean* — proposes articles about the experimentation program to her editors, but no proposal meets with approval.

**1992:** In May, frustrated by the feeling that we are shouting in the wind, Dotte Troxell announces that she will begin a hunger strike in July, which she says she will continue until death unless

the government releases all data on the experiments and provides care for all survivors. She says she prefers death "on her own terms" to a slow, quiet death preceded by the intensifying pains of her radiation injuries and she wants to use the hunger strike to help establish a union called IRIS: International Radiation Injury Survivors. But, fatigued and under the influence of pain-killing drugs, she dies in a tractor accident in late-May. She leaves behind the text of an intended final speech in which she asks to be cremated so that "the perpetrators of cruel and barbaric experimentation" will be denied "the knowledge they seek." She also forgives all those in the government, the public interest community, and the media who continue to "ignore our plight, for they know not — they were not on shipboard in the nuclear Pacific tests or in the trenches in Nevada, nor are they with the veterans in VA hospitals ...."

**1993:** In mid-November, *The Albuquerque Tribune* publishes Eileen Welsome's three-part series, "The Plutonium Experiment." In late-December, a decade after Kittrell and Honicker alerted the paper to the story — *The Tennessean* finally publishes an article about the Vanderbilt experiment and its medical follow-up study.

Emma Craft, who had never known that she had been fed radioactive iron in the 1940s, reads a detailed description of the 1958 death by cancer of an unnamed eleven-year-old girl whom she recognizes as her daughter.

**1994:** Craft, along with a handful of other women who have learned through *The Tennessean* that they had been experimental subjects, files a class action lawsuit against a long list of defendants, led by Vanderbilt University. (I sign on as a radiation expert with the law firm representing the women and surviving children.)

Acting as if the recent "revelations" are news to him, John Herrington, Secretary of Energy in the Reagan administration and now vice-chairman of the California Republican party, tells *The Associated Press* that during his tenure "there had not been enough work done to establish that there was a problem." This is reported without comment or correction. ♦



## TECHNOLOGY

# A TRIP DOWN THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY

BY TODD OPPENHEIMER

Drawing up a map of even the main construction zones of the information superhighway is as risky as riding a dragon and, possibly, an exercise in futility, since the highway metaphor itself may be misleading. As Paul Saffo of the Institute for the Future, in Menlo Park, California, points out, "Highways are orderly affairs, with set entrances and exits. This is a huge communication fur ball. Block one access and people can go to another."

Call it what you will — highway, fur ball, or dragon ride — its shape keeps shifting and expanding exponentially. In December, for example, Dow Jones disclosed that *The Wall Street Journal* would bring out a version of the paper in "interactive multimedia" form, while the *Los Angeles Times* and Pacific Tele-*sis* joined to create an electronic shopping service that could make classified advertising obsolete.

Meanwhile, for drivers, passengers, and construction-site kibitzers, here's a rundown of some major points of access.

### CONFERENCES

One of the most popular (and lucrative) locales on the new highway is the electronic cafe. There are two versions: the electronic bulletin board — CompuServe, America Online, Prodigy, and The Well — where people gather daily to chat in cyberspace; and the ubiqui-



tous multimedia conference.

More than 100 of these technothons are staged every year, each one a dizzying display

of electronic wizardry, human enthusiasm, and verbal creativity. At last year's Digital World conference in Beverly Hills, a panelist talked about "information plasticity" and "exploded cinema." Another, overwhelmed by the pace of change in the media world, begged for a new "emotional mouse."

These events aren't cheap. A pass just to the exhibitions can range from \$10 to \$150, while admission to a full array of panels can cost up to \$700. On the other hand, you'll come away with a valuable collection of media material and business cards.

Here is a small selection of conferences of special interest to journalists.

•**March 1-3: San Jose, California, Intermedia '94.** One of the largest trade shows on multimedia products, with emphasis on compact disk productions. Panel topics include multimedia publishing, distribution, and licensing. This conference regularly features the main players in cable television and the computer and entertainment worlds. At least one exhibitor usually makes news by announcing a major development. A good spot for job hunting. Call 203-352-8240.

•**March 20-24: Las Vegas, National Association of Broadcasters Multimedia World.** NAB's second annual gathering will focus on engineering and production. This is the new media's primary venue for the broadcast television crowd, which so far has lagged behind cable. Call NAB: 202-429-5345.

•**May 22-25: New Orleans, National Cable Television Association.** Emphasis here will be on the possibilities of "full-service, interactive television," whereby people can talk to each other through "videoconferencing" and call up material at their own convenience rather than when a TV station schedules it. Call 202-775-3629.

•**June 6-8: Los Angeles, Digital World. '94.** One of the year's main multimedia events for the general audience, Digital World stages panels that

both explore and question the trends. Set in Los Angeles, this conference tilts toward the entertainment world — movies, music, photography, script writing, electronic books, rights questions, and all manner of computer games. A watering hole for Who's Who in multimedia. Call 800-488-2883.

•**June 16-19: St. Louis, Missouri, Investigative Reporters & Editors, Inc.** IRE regularly attracts leaders in investigative reporting to panels on such gritty topics as finding your way through federal records, backgrounding a shady character, and interviewing sensitive sources. At least one day is devoted to the emerging science of computer-assisted investigations: using database software programs to analyze computerized government records. IRE is also exploring the possibility of launching an international bulletin board network, complete with a library specifically for journalists. Call IRE: 314-882-2042.

•**June 23-25: Chicago, Consumer Electronics Show.** As the primary showcase for the hottest new consumer products, it is probably the best place for a news organization that's moving into new technologies to find out what equipment its audience will be using. Call 202-457-8770.

•**June 24-25: Las Vegas, the Newspaper Association of America (formerly American Newspaper Publishers Association).** Focusing on new technologies, the NAA will examine a few papers available on electronic bulletin boards, then look at prototypes for the electronic papers of tomorrow — more personalized, more mixed with other media, and yielding opportunities to correspond with writers, editors, even newsmakers. Panelists will include Peggy Bair from the Knight-Ridder Information Design Laboratory, Walter Bender from MIT's Media Lab, and representatives from several of the new interactive cable television trials. Call NAA: 703-648-1139.

•**December 6-9: Washington, D.C., Internet World '94.** By far the biggest electronic network of them all, The Internet has become the main thread in the nation's emerging information web. This conference will feature people who have become expert with The Internet, and panels on specific

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domains of the Internet world. Call 800-632-5537.

#### MULTIMEDIA LABS:

Big discoveries in new media mostly occur within thick corporate walls amid great secrecy. But most large technology



firms now have, or are developing, their own laboratories, one of whose purposes is to explore multimedia.

Most (including AT&T's Bellcore, Xerox PARC, and Apple) share some information with the outside world. Some are intensely private, such as Interval Research, Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen's California think tank, which one observer said operates within "concentric rings of secrecy."

CableLabs, a Boulder-based consortium of North America's primary cable television companies, serves as a general research and information center. Information is mostly proprietary, but CableLabs publishes three newsletters. Chair of the lab's board is John Malone, president and c.e.o. of Tele-Communications, Inc., the nation's largest cable TV firm. Contact Mike Schwartz, vice-president of communications, 303-661-9100.

Universities are gradually focusing on the possibilities of multimedia, notably New York University and the University of Colorado. In the San Francisco Bay area, commonly called the Multimedia Capital, San Francisco State University has the largest multimedia training program in the country. Call SF State: 415-904-7700.

For the primary journalism labs, see "Side Trips to Cybersites" (right).

#### INTERACTIVE TV TRIALS:

Many cable television operations are experimenting with what's called "interactive television," often in partnership with a regional phone company. Offerings include movies and news on demand, home shopping, interactive games, two-way videoconferencing, and links for tiny portable communication devices (called "personal digital assistants," or PDAs). Eventually, viewers of sporting events should be able to choose

their own replays and camera angles.

•Sometime midyear, Time Warner Inc. plans to use Orlando, Florida, to test its "Full Service Network" on 4,000 homes (to expand throughout the community by the end of 1998). Each home will be given a printer to pull whatever material the user chooses. TW is subsidizing the network in its eagerness to try out the digital highway's new toys. Contact Edward Adler: 212-275-8000.

•A joint venture between Viacom Cable and AT&T will attempt something similar to the Orlando venture in Castro Valley, a corner of the San Francisco Bay area. Contact Hillary Condit

of Viacom: 212-258-6346.

•Before year's end, Bell Atlantic plans to offer 250,000 residents of Montgomery County, Maryland, limited service of movies on demand, through ordinary phone lines. Bell Atlantic, which plans to merge with cable giant TCI, has been the most aggressive Baby Bell in advanced video service. Its partners here are IBM, Philips Consumer Electronics, and a consortium of smaller technology firms. Call Larry Plumb: 703-974-2814.

•Based on several years of experimenting with simple interactive television in Denver, the US West phone

## Side Trips to Cybersites

BY KURT KLEINER



"We don't want to throw away the 300 years' experience we've had in newspaper publishing. We want

to build on that," says Roger Fidler of Knight-Ridder's Information Design Laboratory in Boulder, Colorado, one of the two most prestigious research labs; the other is at MIT.

Fidler operates on the "fundamental belief that to be successful with the general consumer market the product will have to be portable; it will have to be very easy to use, ideally no more complicated than turning a page in a newspaper or changing channels. And we think it's got to be cheap."

His solution (see "Future Tense," *CJR*, November/December 1993) is an electronic newspaper that can be downloaded into a portable computer "tablet" about the size and shape of a pad of notebook paper.

While they're waiting for someone to develop the hardware, Fidler and his team are working on the software. Their electronic newspaper would look a lot like a conventional newspaper with headlines and abstracts providing what Fidler calls a "bridge of familiarity" to

help readers make their choices.

A reader can navigate the paper several ways — page by page like a regular paper, or section by section, with each section-front providing a summary of what's inside. The prototype also uses such by-now familiar multimedia tricks as still pictures that turn into video clips when you point to them and stories that provide entrance points to related or previous stories.

And there are ads. "We like ads. People like ads," says Teresa Martin, the lab's information manager.

"Part of our mission is to get advertisers to realize we are not stuck in the industrial age. We are moving into the information age aggressively," Fidler says. "We still have the chance of becoming the predominant news medium of the twenty-first century."

According to Fidler, Knight-Ridder plans to have an electronic version of one of its existing papers up and running by 1995.

At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab, rather than trying to design a specific product, researchers are working on a range of devices and programs that change the way people collect and read news. In February 1993, a consortium of twenty-one companies, including Gannett, Knight-Ridder, Times Mirror, and Hearst agreed to invest about \$2 million a year in MIT's News in the Future research project, directed by Walter Bender. Bender's job is to take the sometimes arcane work of fellow researchers in areas like pattern recognition and artificial intelligence, and



company will attempt a full-service system in Nebraska with no cable partner at present. US West will build its own system on top of Omaha's current cable system. Meanwhile, Cox Cable will be adding its own interactive service in Omaha. Contact Dick MacKnight at US West: 303-793-6559; Dave Andersen at Cox Cable: 404-843-5855.

#### REGULATORY EVENTS:

Congress and the Clinton administration share at least one goal — breaking down unnecessary barriers to the new media entrepreneurs. Each institution has proposed different but perhaps com-

plementary regulatory changes, which should be watched carefully.

•In mid-January, Vice-president Gore announced the administration's initial policy for the telecommunications industry: first, the concept of affordable "universal service" available to all; second, "open access," which would let people buy information from and sell it to the new networks at a fair, competitive price. The administration also wants to stimulate competition in the electronic marketplace by letting phone and cable television companies enter each other's markets. (Monopolies — whereby a cable company



acquires a phone service in the same market, say — are still to be prevented.) A proposed addition to the Federal Communications Act would free companies from current regulatory burdens in exchange for the provision of open access. The administration hopes to pass legislation before the end of the year. Contact National Telecommunications and Information Administration: 202-482-1551.

•The House and Senate each have submitted bills to reverse some of the restrictions created by the break-up of AT&T in the early '80s. The bills would let Baby Bells pursue long-distance and general information services, as well as expanded manufacturing opportunities. Both houses of Congress also have advanced bills to let phone and cable companies into each other's turf, similar to Gore's proposal. Contact 202-226-2424 for House work; 202-224-5115 for Senate proposals.

•On March 8, the Federal Communications Commission will begin a five-year auction of a kind of cellular radio service, called PCS, estimated to be worth several billion dollars. The service is mostly unused spectrum held by local government agencies. Bidding is open to all, but there may be some restrictions on current cellular radio service providers. Contact Marc Martin or Kent Nakamura: 202-653-5940.

•Last August, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office handed a powerful patent to a little-known technology company called Compton's NewMedia. The patent covered "a multimedia search and retrieval system" through a variety of electronic paths. Predictably, competitors went nuts, claiming that their software can do similar tricks and that this patent could lock up competition. In December, the patent office granted a review. Hearings on patenting computer software inventions are now under way. Contact Ruth Ford: 703-305-8600. ♦

figure out how it can be used in the news business.

"The impact this technology's going to have on news in the future isn't going to manifest itself in a gadget," Bender says. "Rather it's going to manifest itself in an architecture. And the architecture is going to do three things. It's going to change our concept of timeliness. It's going to change our concept of convenience. And it's going to change our concept of relevancy. In order to do those three things, we need to understand the individual."

According to this vision, readers will receive information from dozens or hundreds of sources — newspapers, news services, Internet news groups, professional publications. To keep from being buried under the sheer mass of information, people will employ "intelligent agents," computer programs designed to sort through all that information and bring back only the stories they are likely to want to read. For example, every morning, Bender's computer puts together a newspaper for him he calls The Bender Bugle.

"I'm a lot more interested in bicycles than *The New York Times* editors are. The Bender Bugle has every ad for a bicycle that appears on The Internet. But I don't get any fashion news," Bender adds.

How well this approach works will depend on how well the MIT researchers succeed in designing intelligent agents that understand what stories are about, at least enough so that they can make educated guesses that if you're interested in stock market news

you might also want to read about SEC regulations. These agents must be able to learn as they go, watching what you read and refining the selection process a little every day. What they don't do — yet — is evaluate the information they process for accuracy and bias, the way a trained editor does.

By removing journalists from the mix and allowing people to go straight to the source, Carl Hausman, president of the Center for Media in the Public Interest, points out, you run the risks created by bulletin board systems and news groups today. There's simply not much accountability.

"A lot of this information is anonymous. Some of this stuff is crazy. You have no idea where it came from. If I read it in *The New York Times*, I know it's reputable. At least they have something at stake," Hausman says. Moreover, he argues, even if the facts people get over the wire are correct, readers still need help interpreting those facts. Journalists develop "crap detectors," and learn to examine information for hidden agendas and to put news in perspective. "I don't think most people are trained to do that. And they shouldn't have to," Hausman says.

It seems likely that readers in the future will be offered both kinds of electronic news — newspapers with what Fidler calls "branded identities," and information retrievers that search a whole range of sources which may or may not be reliable.

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## OPINION

# IRAN-CONTRA: THE PRESS INDICTS THE PROSECUTOR

BY MALCOLM BYRNE  
AND PETER KORNBLUH

On January 19, the day after independent counsel Lawrence Walsh released his final report on the Iran-contra scandal, *The New York Times* ran a front-page news analysis headed **THE SCANDAL THAT FELL FLAT**. Written by David E. Rosenbaum, the article dismissed Walsh's final report as adding "nothing but small details to what was already known." The issues, he wrote, were "basically lost on the American public," and key culprits emerged from the hearings "as patriots."

"As for Mr. Walsh," Rosenbaum continued, "he himself may turn out to be the most widely scorned figure in the whole affair."

One reason Iran-contra's "miscreants were turned into martyrs," Rosenbaum asserted, was that Walsh mismanaged the investigation. A case can be made, however, that by failing to adequately investigate Iran-contra in the first place, and by providing an uncritical and even deferential vehicle for former Reagan administration officials to attack Walsh, the press aided a protracted effort to blur the distinction between villain and victim, lies and honesty, criminality and the rule of law.

*Malcolm Byrne and Peter Kornbluh are co-editors of the National Security Archive's recently published The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History. Jon Elliston provided research assistance for this article.*

To be sure, some of the coverage of the Walsh report (and of Iran-contra itself) was outstanding. When the report was released, National Public Radio ran substantive historical tape of the events surrounding the scandal on both *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*; the *Los Angeles Times*, despite the earthquake follow-up, presented a solid spread covering all the major aspects of the story. And The Associated Press, led by veteran reporter Pete Yost, played a vanguard media role, mining the report for story after story.

By and large, however, the press seemed predisposed to focus on the shortcomings of Walsh's investigation rather than the contents of the report and its significance. "The drift in this town now," notes former Watergate investigator and *Washington Post* reporter Scott Armstrong, "is that Walsh took too long, spent too much money, and that it wasn't worth it." Indeed, television reports and a number of leading newspapers, as did *The New York Times*, declared that there was little new in the report. Actually it drew on a significant body of new documentation, including George Bush's personal diaries; Caspar Weinberger's 1,700 pages of handwritten notes; extensive notes taken by George Shultz's aide Charles Hill of debriefings of high-level meetings by Shultz; top-secret CIA documents on the contra resupply operations; FBI reports of interviews with key players; and previously secret grand jury testimony.

Many articles also overstated Walsh's verdict on President Reagan's legal innocence. The *Times's* lead story, for example, incorrectly asserted in the subhead that he did not break the law. In fact, the report makes it clear that Reagan displayed a "disregard for civil laws." When told by Weinberger that the sales were illegal, Reagan is quoted in an FBI summary of Hill's notes as saying: "[T]hey can impeach me if they want; visiting days are Wednesday." Weinberger responded, "You will not be alone."

Meanwhile, most reporters could not write about the Office of Independent Counsel's work without characterizing it as the "seven-year, \$37 million investigation," while failing to explain the



**Lawrence Walsh at his final press conference as independent counsel**

reasons for the time and expense, including the unprecedented legal and political obstacles Walsh faced.

Particularly in the realm of television coverage, Walsh's investigation fell victim to what his press secretary, Mary J. Belcher, calls "drive-by journalism" — superficial coverage reflecting a lack of institutional memory.

To understand how individuals who perpetrated the scandal are still able to warp the facts, consider how former Attorney General Edwin Meese, who emerged as the point man for rebutting the report, handled the press — and how the press failed to handle him. He appeared on the *Today* show and *Good Morning America*, for example, without any counterpoint, after Walsh, citing the short format, declined to appear. Recall that Meese is named in the Walsh report as having "spearheaded" a coverup of the November 1985 arms shipments to Iran, which he "believed were illegal, in order to protect the president." Recall also that he is the man who introduced the Iran-contra scandal to the nation on November 25, 1986.

At that time, Meese told the nation





AP/WIDE WORLD

that the president did not know in advance of the November 1985 missile shipment to Iran. Reagan, he said, only "later learned in February 1986 details about [the] shipment."

That was then. Now, speaking on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*, Meese claims that the president *did* know about these arms shipments, which Meese now says were legal, and therefore did not necessitate a coverup plan. "The more the president knew, the more he was able to authorize this and . . . give it the sanctions it needed to go ahead," Meese told Robert MacNeil. In a mirror image of what he himself was doing, Meese stated that Walsh had "distorted the facts, he has misled the American people, and he has arrived at a fraudulent claim."

Neither MacNeil nor Charles Gibson nor Bryant Gumbel pushed Meese to explain the discrepancy in his accounts. Instead, he was allowed to attack Walsh's integrity, as well as his report.

A Times Mirror survey of journalists taken in December 1992 found that only 24 percent felt coverage on Iran-contra was good; 70 percent called it fair to poor.

Without a doubt, Iran-contra was a

tough beat. Joanne Omang, who covered U.S. policy and the contra war for *The Washington Post*, remembers how difficult it became to report on the reality of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua when confronted with what she describes as "bald-faced lies" from officials such as Elliott Abrams and Robert McFarlane. "They said that black was white. I wasn't able to get anywhere," she says.

The disclosure in the fall of 1986 of the extensive contra resupply operations being run out of the White House, Omang adds, opened her eyes to the inaccuracies of her reporting: "I realized how wrong the story had been over those last couple of years. Although I had used all my professional resources, I had misled my readers." Omang says this was a "profoundly disillusioning" experience, one that prompted her to leave journalism for a career as a novelist. "There is more truth," she concludes, "in fiction."

Robert Parry, also disillusioned, also turned to writing books, the first being *Fooling America: How Washington Insiders Twist the Truth and Manufacture the Conventional Wisdom*. The first reporter to name Oliver North in a news article, Parry succeeded in breaking through the efforts of McFarlane and other National Security Council officials to deceive him. But after mid-1987, when John Poindexter testified before Congress that Reagan did not know of the diversion, the conventional wisdom became that Iran-contra was "a has-been story." His editors at *Newsweek* and elsewhere, Parry maintains, refused to put the journalistic resources into reporting the continuing White House coverup that he and other reporters believed had taken place.

Walsh's investigation also came to be seen as old news. This led to media neglect of the unprecedented perjury trial of former CIA deputy director Clair George in July 1992. Meanwhile, the old-news label made it easier for Walsh's enemies to use the press to mount political attacks against him and his lengthy investigation.

Early on in his investigation, Walsh enjoyed favorable coverage — notable exceptions being *The Washington Times* and editorials in *The Wall Street*

*Journal*. By the end of his tenure, however, both editorially and in news coverage, the press tended to bolster his enemies' portrayal of him as vindictive and partisan. In the interim years, Walsh experienced a series of successes and setbacks, both of which fueled political attacks.

These attacks on the Office of Independent Counsel increased dramatically following Walsh's indictment of Caspar Weinberger on perjury and obstruction charges in June 1992. In addition to the predictable rhetoric from Evans and Novak, *The Washington Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, Jack Anderson wrote of "how aggressively Iran-contra prosecutors were looking for a scalp" as they "frantically" sought to "redeem the highly controversial probe." And the usually bland David Brinkley declared with disgust on his Sunday show: "I have thought for some time he [Walsh] should pack his bags and leave town." Even Walsh's hometown newspaper, *The Daily Oklahoman*, got into the act after Walsh criticized President Bush for his Christmas Eve pardon of Weinberger and five others. "Walsh has behaved outrageously for six years. He has sought to destroy the reputations of patriots," the paper said in a December 29, 1992 lead editorial titled "Fire Walsh."

The conventional wisdom on Walsh is that he was responsible for his own bad press because he did not respond aggressively to the attacks on his investigation or his character. "He shot himself in the foot," a *CJR* editor said in a story conference about this article. Walsh responds that, in dealing with the press, the independent counsel is constrained by rules and regulations governing prosecutions: "My strategy was to not discuss our cases until after the trial." Walsh's press secretary, Mary Belcher, points out that this caused problems for the OIC's image. "Because you can't tell people what you're doing, it presents a very lopsided picture" if the other side is talking.

And the other side was indeed talking. Throughout the fall of 1993, for example, lawyers for those named in the report leaked passages that they had been allowed to read in an effort to cast



the report as unfair and to deflate its newsworthiness before it was publicly released. "Their idea was to dribble the information out to offset the impact of the document," Walsh says. At least one reporter who covered the release of the report — and used these lawyers as sources — acknowledges that the Iran-contra figures were able to manipulate his story through such leaks.

The spin on Walsh put out by his detractors clearly influenced journalistic opinion. A July 4, 1993, *New York Times Magazine* profile titled "Lawrence Walsh's Last Battle" offered an in-depth view of Walsh's personal-history, professional philosophy, his mandate as independent counsel, and the extraordinary obstacles the Reagan and Bush administrations had put in his path. But the *Times* editors decided to balance that article, as it were, with a companion piece on Oliver North's Senate bid, and to run a magazine cover with a photo of Walsh on top and North on the bottom with the words "PATRIOT or ZEALOT?" in between — leaving the reader to decide which was which.

An April 11, 1993, *Washington Post Magazine* profile of Walsh by Marjorie Williams dismissed Walsh's "sense of duty" as "anachronistic," and cited as an example his insistence "that it was a serious matter — a serious *crime* — for members of the executive branch to lie to Congress." In a prophecy that her article could only hope to fulfill — her editors isolated it as a drop quote — Williams wrote, "The truth is that when Walsh finally goes home, he will leave a perceived loser."

For his part, Walsh believes the coverage, while not perfect, was "excellent [and] essentially accurate." He seems impervious to attack. "When you're a prosecutor you quickly learn the defense lawyer's credo," he explains. "If the facts are not on your side, try the case on the law. If the law is not on your side, try the case on the facts. If neither the facts nor the law are on your side, attack the prosecutor." Walsh says that none of the press coverage influenced his actions as independent counsel — not even the decision last spring to forgo subpoenaing George

Bush, in order to force him to explain why, for six years, he had concealed his diaries from federal investigators.

But the coverage, arguably, has had an impact on a number of other critical political issues. One is the renewal of the independent counsel statute that will govern the work of Walsh's successors and the future system of checks and balances on executive-branch wrongdoing. Walsh observes that the attacks on him "supplied material for the opponents of the act to use." Emboldened by negative media images of Walsh, Senate Republicans drafted a new bill that sought to curtail the ability of future special prosecutors to conduct lengthy investigations and produce substantive final reports. Nobody on Capitol Hill addressed the need to strengthen the act as it relates to prosecuting crimes committed under the guise of national security, in order to avoid the executive branch delay and obstruction that Walsh faced.

Similarly, Walsh's negative press can only help the candidacy of Oliver North, who formally announced his bid to be senator from Virginia on January 28. Although North declared himself "exonerated" after his convictions on three felony charges were overturned on appeal, the final report makes clear that "the factual basis of his guilt is not in doubt." (In early February, it is interesting to note, the AP's Pete Yost reported that North had arranged to expunge his name from court papers showing that he, along with Reagan and Meese, had attempted to keep Walsh's report from the public.) Still, North has been able to present himself as the patriot — and Walsh as the zealot — trading his role in Iran-contra for personal fortune and political fame. During a lead-in to Ted Koppel's interview with him, ABC's *Nightline* even floated the notion of North as a candidate for president of the United States.

George Orwell would surely note that the Iran-contra operations began in 1984. The degree to which the perpetrators of the scandal were able to transform themselves into the persecuted, to distort the history — and thereby the meaning — of this scandal is one of the most troubling aspects of Iran-contra. This was done with the help of the press. ♦

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# ON THE JOB

## SHOULD GAYS COVER GAY ISSUES?

BY KEITH EDDINGS

As gay journalists come out of the closet in their workplaces, they compel the news industry to answer a number of questions. Some — Should gay reporters be excluded from covering gay issues because of their presumed bias? — are only the latest version of questions about bias raised by the presence of women, African-Americans, and other minority groups in the newsroom. Others are more complicated. If a news organization allows gay reporters to cover gay issues, should it also require reporters to disclose their sexual orientation when they cover those issues? How far — if at all — should gay reporters distance themselves from events staged by or of special significance to their community, such as last April's march in Washington?

In response to the question of whether a gay reporter should be assigned to cover a gay issue, many editors say they wouldn't hesitate to do so. In fact, some editors say they prefer to assign gays to such stories out of a belief that they bring an insight to gay issues much as blacks are thought to do when covering civil rights, and women when covering breast cancer.

"Being gay and covering a gay story to me are never inconsistent — never," says Justin Gillis, urban affairs editor at *The Miami Herald*. "Having a gay reporter cover a gay issue in a sophisticated way is, as a rule, a good thing. That person brings a skill and an ability at dialogue with the people being cov-

*Keith Eddings, a former reporter for Knight-Ridder and Gannett, teaches journalism at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York.*

ered, and sources and knowledge of the community."

The real issue for a journalist isn't his objectivity, because "no one comes at anything with pure, unvarnished objectivity," Gillis adds. "The question to me is, how fair-minded are you and is your vision broad enough to take in the points of view of people you might really disagree with? We've had gay journalists go up and do the stories on the rampant homophobes in north Florida and, conversely, we've had gay journalists do stories on gay civil rights issues."

James Fallows, Washington editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, holds that simply checking the copy of a gay reporter writing about "rampant homophobes" to ensure fairness and balance isn't enough. Gay reporters who regularly cover gay issues, Fallows believes, should either disclose their homosexuality to their editors, sources, readers, listeners, and viewers, or they should write about other issues.

Fallows acknowledges that such a policy could force gay reporters to disclose their sexuality to their editors whether they accept assignments about gay issues or turn them down. But he says that "being involved in journalism — which to a large degree involves making judgments about other people, intruding on their privacy in various ways, asking readers to take certain things on trust from you — involves some sacrifices that might not be necessary in other lines of work."

Last March, *The Atlantic* published a 9,000-word cover story on the biological roots of homosexuality that was widely acclaimed in the gay community. True to the policy outlined by Fallows, the story, written by Chandler Burr, included this sentence: "Many of the scientists who have been studying homosexuality are gay, as am I." (And as am I.)

Fallows doesn't single out gays for this type of newsroom candor: all reporters have an obligation to disclose relevant facts about themselves. "Editors and reporters might not think that various identities — gender, race, political views, sex — have bearing," Fallows says. "But the readers may not agree, and in that respect one should let readers know to a reasonable degree. I think I can be completely detached in

judging Bill Clinton's strengths and weaknesses. But if a reader later found out that I worked for a Democratic administration, that reader might feel he'd been deceived in some way." Disclosure should not be a written rule, Fallows adds, but an "understood professional obligation." (Fallows was chief speechwriter for former President Jimmy Carter.)

But gay journalists may find that coming out on the job is a risky business. Editors at *The Houston Post* provided evidence of that in August 1991 when they fired columnist Juan Palomo during a dispute over a column about a fatal gay-bashing in Houston in which Palomo attempted to come out. Editors ordered him to remove references to his own homosexuality from the column, then fired him a month later for talking to other news organizations about the internal disagreement over the column at the paper. After a week of public protest, Palomo, who had worked at the paper for thirteen years, was hired back.

The openly gay journalists often finds himself under a special kind of pressure — from within the gay community itself. In a December 20, 1992, *Week In Review* piece titled "Covering AIDS and Living It: A Reporter's Testimony," Jeffrey Schmalz, who covered gay issues for *The New York Times* until his death last November, described an exchange at the funeral of a man who had died of AIDS.

"Are you here as a reporter or as a gay man with AIDS?" Schmalz said he was asked at the funeral. When he responded that he was there as a reporter, Schmalz wrote, "Some shook their heads in disgust, all but shouting 'Uncle Tom!' They wanted an advocate, not a reporter."

Outside the newsroom, the line between professional duties and private lives seems to shift with the issue. For example:

The board of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) voted early in 1992 that members would not march as an organized group in April's march in Washington because it was an overtly political event intended to influence government policy. (Many of the nation's leading news organizations apparently agreed. The Associated Press, ABC News, and *The*



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*Washington Post*, among others, prohibited their editorial staffs from participating in the march.)

Late that summer the NLGJA board voted not to support Sandy Nelson, an education reporter for the Tacoma, Washington, *News Tribune*, who had sued the paper after she was reassigned to the copy desk because she was working for a local gay rights initiative. The NLGJA board concluded that the issue in the dispute was not discrimination against a gay journalist, but whether journalists should be involved in any political campaign.

To some, the NLGJA's decision in these cases seemed at odds with its decision a few months later, in December 1992, to ask the National Hispanic Journalists Association to move its convention from Denver as part of the campaign to boycott Colorado after voters there approved a measure invalidating local laws protecting gays from discrimination. Leroy Aarons, former executive editor of *The Oakland Tribune* and president of the NLGJA, explains that the board acted in the latter case because the Colorado law "potentially affected journalists and their right to work."

Palomo of *The Houston Post*, who has served on the NLGJA board, says that making such distinctions has put the organization "on the road to becoming a gay social club. We're talking about the rights of reporters, and the NLGJA shouldn't sit back and let these reporters be trampled on," he says, referring to the association's refusal to support Nelson in her dispute with *The News Tribune*. "What's the organization for if it's not going to do anything for its members?"

Off-duty activism can be more than just an ethical issue for journalists. Pressure by conservative groups that complain that recent coverage of gay issues has legitimized and glamorized homosexuality can shift the focus of debate from ethics to the bottom line. Asked how he might respond to a campaign to remove an openly gay reporter, Bruno Cohen, vice-president and news director of WNBC-TV in New York City, replied, "The pressure to be successful in a commercial environment means that if anyone has an attribute that has a negative impact on ratings,

their job security is certainly affected by it."

Broadcast journalists can be especially vulnerable to pressure from the right because on-the-air reporters and anchors are living-room celebrities, unshielded by the anonymity of print. "It's our face, our personality," says Steve Gendel, chief science and medicine correspondent for CNBC, who declared his homosexuality to a live audience of 175,000 households in July while covering a report about the genetic roots of homosexuality. "It's more than just a byline, because we're identified with a story."

Lesbians working in television can be even more vulnerable, because, as Barbara Raab, a producer at NBC's *Dateline*, explains, the "aura of availability" that surrounds women reporters and anchors can be shattered if their audiences know they are gay. "There are lesbians on the air, but there are no open lesbians on the air," Raab says. "Believe me, none of these women are going to talk to you [for this story]."

Among those bringing pressure on stations are conservative media watchdogs such as Accuracy in Media and a handful of smaller groups, including the Springs of Life Church, a Pentecostal church in Lancaster, California. The church produced "The Gay Agenda," a twenty-minute video that offers a brutally unflattering portrayal of gay life in America, and last year began publishing *Lambda Report*, a twelve-page monthly newsletter devoted to "monitoring the homosexual agenda in American politics and culture."

The newsletter's August edition included a story by Joseph Farah, formerly an editor at the now-defunct *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, about "the pernicious role of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association in media coverage of homosexual issues." Farah's story identified several reporters as "card-carrying members" of the gay journalists group, and was accompanied by a sidebar that listed nineteen other journalists who "are or have been active" with the group.

*Lambda Report* editor Peter LaBarbera says that a future newsletter may update the list of gay journalists published in the August issue. What service do such lists provide? "A lot of



## OPINION

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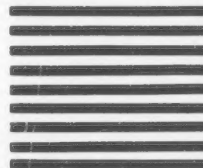
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people feel there is an activism among reporters," LaBarbera replied. "They want to know if this person is an open gay, if he's proud of it, if he's attending meetings."

Gay journalists also are being challenged by other colleagues, including syndicated columnist Cal Thomas. In a column published a few days after the gay journalists association met in New York in September, Thomas scolded the news organizations that set up tables at a job fair that opened the convention. (Among the twenty organizations were *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Los Angeles Times*, The Associated Press, National Public Radio, and ABC News.) In an interview after his column appeared, Thomas argued that joining a group like the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association is in itself a statement of political activism by journalists, which he called an "ethical outrage."

"Those of us in journalism have to understand that our stock in trade is our credibility with our consumers, our

## Broadcast journalists, unshielded by the anonymity of print, can be especially vulnerable to pressure from the right

readers, viewers, listeners," Thomas said. "If they feel they're getting anything but the facts, then their trust level and our credibility will decline."

The NLGJA, for its part, is not about to urge its members to shrink back into the closet. The group is organizing task forces to establish parity in employee benefits, such as health care for the domestic partners of gay journalists, and to reach out to journalism majors on college campuses. And it recently completed a survey of working conditions for gays in broadcast newsrooms.

The NLGJA's Aaron says the association will also be working for parity

in news coverage, to "mainstream gay and lesbian information" in the media. As an example, he recounted a story conference he sat in on recently with editors at the *Detroit Free Press* at which editors discussed a story about new angles in refinancing homes.

"I spoke to a group of editors afterward and made the point that if you're refinancing as a heterosexual couple, or as an unmarried gay or lesbian couple, you're dealing with an entirely different world with regard to taxes, inheritance, a whole range of things," Aaron says. "I made the suggestion that that might stand on its own as a sidebar, its own story, or as a piece of the main story. Everyone was taken by surprise. That's the level where I think our organization can be useful in the future."

Aaron's view of the future indicates how much has changed in the decade since *CJR* reported ("Uptight on Gay News," *CJR*, March/April 1982) that the prevailing mood in newsrooms was "a compound of hostility and ignorance," resulting in stories that were "inadequate and uninformed." ♦

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# BOOKS

## THE MISCAST MEDIA

BY E.J. DIONNE, JR.

Thomas E. Patterson has some important criticisms to make about journalism and the way journalists affect presidential campaigns. Unfortunately, he is so obsessed with journalists that he casts them as the only important actors in politics and in the process exaggerates their sins (yes, that's possible). Candidates are reduced to the role of passive victims, and political consultants — whose impact on politics has mushroomed — hardly appear here at all. And he only barely deals with the fact that voters, candidates, and others outside journalism have actually begun to deal with some of the problems he is rightly worried about.

**OUT OF ORDER**  
BY THOMAS E. PATTERSON  
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Patterson's underlying thesis is straightforward and largely sensible. The rise of the system of presidential primaries after 1968 fundamentally changed the way presidential candidates are selected. In the past, the selection process was built around the national convention, which was in the hands of professional politicians. Pols dominated the system, so political values dominated the nominating process.

Ostensibly, the replacement of the politicians with direct primaries was designed to put the task of nominating candidates into the hands of the voters. But things were not that simple.

*E.J. Dionne, Jr., the author of Why Americans Hate Politics, is a columnist for The Washington Post.*

Someone had to mediate between the voters and the candidates. The mediating role was taken on by the press.

The problem, Patterson argues, is that the press does not operate on the basis of political values but of journalistic values. Journalism, he says, emphasizes storytelling and conflict, creating an appetite for what's new today, the slips and errors of the politicians, the "game" or "horse-race" aspects of elections, and the strategic moves of candidates. Political values are different. A politically functional system, he says, would emphasize the issues that are central to the voters, consensus-building aimed at giving a candidate a chance to govern, and the continuities (as opposed to the slips and twists and turns) of a candidate's overall message.

"My argument is that the problem of the modern campaign lies beyond the press, in the electoral system, which asks the media to fill a role it cannot play," he writes.

There is a lot of truth here, and some of these points have been made forcefully by journalists themselves (including my *Washington Post* colleague Paul Taylor). In particular, Patterson is right to emphasize that for all the attention journalists pay to broken promises, the fact is that victorious candidates tend to govern much as they promised to during their campaigns. Patterson cites political scientist Gerald Pomper's important finding that party platforms are actually a rather good guide to how politicians will govern.

If Patterson had either stopped here, or broadened his critique to raise questions about other aspects of the political system — for example, the role of polling and political advertising — this would be a much better book. The problem is that he is so fixed on journalists that he forgets his point that journalistic values are different from political values. As a result, he not only criticizes journalists for being excessively negative and focused on matters of little concern to voters; he also criticizes them for doing their job.

His opening example is typical. He cites a piece by CBS's Eric Engberg criticizing Clinton for being so slow to take a stand during the campaign on the final negotiated version of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"Time out!" says Engberg. "Clinton has a reputation as a committed policy wonk who soaks up details like a sponge, but on an issue which will likely cost him votes no matter what side he takes, the onetime Rhodes scholar is a conveniently slow learner."

Now it's quite true such "reality check" pieces can be misleading. They rarely give a candidate a chance to defend himself or herself from the charges being made and they look a lot like negative ads. But in this case, Engberg had it right, as any honest Clinton adviser would readily admit. NAFTA was a terrible issue for Clinton because it divided his constituency. It did take him an eternity to take a stand. But Patterson doesn't go into the politics of the issue. He simply dismisses Engberg's comments as "fatuous." He takes a similar approach throughout the book, blaming the press for the things candidates themselves do for their own political purposes.

This is part of a larger difficulty with Patterson's argument. He writes as if the press were the only player that counts and therefore he talks little about how the paid thirty-second spot and the fundraising required to get it on the air have shaped so much of the political dialogue. He ignores a fact that ought to be disturbing to the press: that a large percentage of the accurate information voters get about a campaign comes not from the press, but from paid advertising.

There's another problem: the facts Patterson himself cites often belie his argument. It can be argued that the press drove Gary Hart out of the 1988 campaign with revelations about his personal life; but such revelations did not drive Clinton out in 1992. Patterson criticizes the press's large emphasis on the early nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, but he eventually acknowledges that the press goes to these states because that's where the candidates go; and he only grudgingly notes that winners of these contests are not helped as much by their victories as legend would have it. Gary Hart won the 1984 New Hampshire primary. Richard Gephardt and Bob Dole won the 1988 Iowa caucuses. Paul Tsongas won the 1992 New Hampshire primary. None won the nomination.



Finally, Patterson discusses but does not do justice to how much the campaign process changed in 1992, because the changes don't fit his thesis. The rise of the "talk show" campaign and the long debate schedule, actually welcomed by many reporters, gave voters a chance to hear more than the sound bites selected by journalists themselves. This is a better book about 1988 than about 1992.

Patterson's solution to the problems he describes is a shorter campaign, with groups of primaries bunched together in the spring. The trouble is that this would, if anything, exaggerate the influence of the media — particularly the paid spot — and, if the southern primaries are any lesson, give the candidates and voters even less contact with each other than they have now.

But this suggestion is certainly debatable and I do hope that reporters ignore what Patterson exaggerates and pay attention to the criticisms he makes that are fair and thus disturbing. Journalists like to think that we serve not only our own imperatives, but also the needs of democracy. But we usually do the first better than the second. Patterson is right about that, and journalists need to think about what that means.

## A SPORT IS BORN

By PETER ANDREWS

Michael Oriard is a man to listen to about football. Now a professor of English at Oregon State, he played for Notre Dame and spent three years in the professional trenches at center for the Kansas City Chiefs. He has produced a scholarly work on the role of the press in the development of college football in which every point and every quotation is scrupulously footnoted in accordance with the requirements of university press publishing. In what should not be a university press requirement but

*Peter Andrews is a free-lance writer with a longstanding interest in sports.*



frequently seems to be, it is something of a labor to read.

Here is Alan Trachtenberg, editor of the series for which the book was written, setting us up in the foreword for what is to come. Trachtenberg is discussing the moment when a defensive back tackles a pass receiver.

"That moment is fraught as much with interpretative as with physical danger, and in negotiating its hermeneutic difficulties, in deploying it to argue for his own dialectical historicism, Oriard establishes his own view that football, like any similar cultural event, cannot be understood 'in its own terms' but as a textual narrative, an open-ended, multivalent story responsive to diverse social needs and thus more properly engaged within the field of social semantics than of myth or monolithic ideology or abstract symbol."

Oriard himself is fluent in psychobabble, as in "utopian longing for polymorphous sexuality recontained in the spurious homosexuality of tackling as a covert embrace."

Not exactly a pep rally.

Nevertheless, there is a great deal of good stuff here. It is central to Oriard's thesis that, back in the late nineteenth century, the press joined Yale coach Walter Camp (and bless the author for not calling him "the legendary Walter Camp") in promoting football as a preparation for everything from executive achievement to military service or

whatever manly endeavor they were pushing that day. At the same time, he does not scant the dissenting view. E.L. Godkin, a prominent editorialist of the day, swept aside any martial claims, saying potential soldiers most needed "greatness of soul." That a football player developed more of this quality than a "quiet student who has drunk deep 'at the fountain of heavenly radiance,'" Godkin opined, "is too absurd for discussion."

Drawing on the English sporting tra-



dition that the game, any game, was to be played on the field, coaching American football from the sidelines was originally considered a "shady practice." That attitude did not sort well with coaches who saw football as a violent chess match with players as pawns, and Oriard neatly demonstrates how the power of the coaches gradually grew until Richard Harding Davis could write in 1893, "There is only one man in New Haven of more importance than Walter Camp, and I have forgotten his name. I think he is the president of the university."

Oriard also neatly ties the expansive



coverage given to college football to the emergence of the popular press as conducted by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, who were as eager to battle for circulation over sports coverage as they were to go to war with Spain. Football, it turns out, fit snugly into the schedule of the press. With baseball and horse racing over by November, football gave sportswriters something to do with their autumn afternoons. Also, Saturdays, with courts and city offices closed, fell into that dreaded category of a "slow news day" and vivid stories about the sons of privilege beating each other up made for exciting stories.

At first, the press didn't understand the game at all and frequently wrote social notes rather than sports stories. By focusing on the crowd in the stands rather than on the players on the field, reporters "humanized" the game. (Their stories about men in derby hats and women in starched dresses seem quaint now, but I find them preferable to

today's media coverage of football crowds, which seems to consist almost entirely of pictures of loony men with no shirts and painted blue.)

Unfortunately, Oriard falls into a number of journalistic traps. He keeps leaving out important pieces of information. He establishes that the game developed from soccer and rugby into our football — the scrimmage line was a seminal change — but he does not keep us up to date on those changes so we have difficulty in following what game they are playing or how it is scored. At one point he says the *New York Herald* printed primers on the rules for readers who didn't understand football. I wish he had done so as well.

He works in some nicely mauve-tinted newspaper prose. Here is the *New York World* on the 1890 Harvard-Yale game:

"Down in the dusk of a dull November day fades the light of Yale. The fierce waves of blue have broken in vain against the crimson reefs of Harvard, and for once their wild college

cries are silenced. For the first time in the history of the present game of football the red roses of Cambridge bloom prominent."

Pretty spiffy stuff. But he leaves out the stars. He tells us Richard Harding Davis was paid "the astonishing sum of \$500" to cover the 1895 Yale-Princeton game for the *New York Journal* but not what Davis wrote. Stephen Crane covered two Harvard games in 1896, but we don't get to read his copy.

And he suckers most dreadfully for the *Police Gazette*. He recounts a *Gazette* story about some carousing following the 1892 Yale-Princeton game in which a "Tenderloin lassie" undergoes what Oriard calls a "near rape," and he chastises the general press for leaving this out of their stories. In the first place, the incident, as reported in the *Gazette*, would not be classified as a "near rape" even at Antioch College. Also, the *Gazette* was a barbershop rag that made up stuff as it went along. Footnoting a source does not make it



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valid. You might as well criticize *The New York Times's* coverage of the Clinton administration for omitting an item in a Cindy Adams column.

In the end, Oriard leaves out the how of his own thesis. He tells us a lot about what the press did, but very little about how "it created an American spectacle." If this were halftime, we would need to make some adjustments.

## WALLY'S WORLD

BY FREDERICK ALLEN

"I've often thought we'd have a utopia in this country if every community adopted all the advice we offered from time to time," DeWitt Wallace said in 1972, at a White House reception given for him by President Nixon. The occasion was the fiftieth birthday of his remarkable magazine, *Reader's Digest*.

Wallace, a minister's son from St. Paul, had been a twenty-five-year-old college dropout working for a publisher of farm periodicals when he got the idea of distilling the best information from hundreds of free federal agricultural

**THEIRS WAS THE KINGDOM: LILA AND DEWITT WALLACE AND THE STORY OF THE READER'S DIGEST**  
BY JOHN HEIDENRY  
W.W. NORTON, 701 PP. \$29.95

bulletins, combining it in one volume, and selling it. He presented the idea to his employer and was told, "I'm sorry it means you're fired. We don't believe in this kind of thing." So Wallace did it himself. He printed 100,000 copies, traveled around five states with them, and sold them all. From there, he leapt to the idea of a general-interest digest of magazine articles. For several years he tried to interest publishers in that idea; no one was interested. So again he did it himself.

He produced the first issue of *Reader's Digest* in 1922, when he was thirty-two. Its cover proclaimed: THIRTY-ONE ARTICLES EACH MONTH FROM LEADING

*Frederick Allen is managing editor of American Heritage magazine.*



MAGAZINES — EACH ARTICLE OF ENDURING VALUE AND INTEREST, IN CONDENSED AND COMPACT FORM. The contents followed an editorial formula, according to this able history of the man and the magazine, that was "more or less faithfully adhered to for the next three-quarters of a century: three pleasantly patronizing tributes to women, two to animals; an inspirational profile of one of DeWitt's heroes, Henry Ford; useful pointers on how to get ahead in life and work; and assurances that common sense and a grasp of facts were society's great equalizers."

Like almost all the founders of great magazines and newspapers, DeWitt Wallace was a man who did what he did not so much for money but because he believed in it so completely that it became his life; unlike most such men, he never sought publicity for himself. He was a mystery to the people closest around him. He was, like more than one well-known modern-day evangelist, both a sincere reactionary moralizer and a womanizer. He was a missionary for capitalism who refused to run his company on true capitalist lines. He was a smoker who crusaded against the tobacco industry.

In the beginning he put the magazine together by himself. His office was the periodicals room of the New York Public Library. He hired women from a community club to wrap and address the issues, and he hired a college student to handwrite the letters soliciting subscriptions. Alongside the upbeat self-help articles he published were some other pretty shabby ones, in those first years, with titles like "The Menace of the Polish Jew" and "The Klan: Defender of Americanism." He kept the magazine out of New York because he was reprinting everything without permission and he didn't want to get caught. That need to keep a low profile also kept him from accepting advertising.

By the time of the White House

reception, *Reader's Digest* was one of the largest-circulation magazines in America, thanks partly to having pioneered several fantastically lucrative subscription come-ons, including a ninety-nine-thousand-dollar sweepstakes. It was fat with advertising, which Wallace had not been persuaded to take until the early 1950s. It had spun off numerous foreign editions, some of which had circulations in the millions, and a condensed-book operation that had grown into an enormous cash cow. But it was still Wallace's magazine.

He believed in what he took to be traditional values. This meant not only a lifelong crusade against Soviet communism and almost any threatening left-wing cause, and not only a religious faith in his concept of the American way; it also meant that his company should not make too much money. His two goals were to get the *Digest* into every home in the world he could get it into and to make and keep its offices a pleasant place to work; both stood ahead of profit, and excessive profit was unseemly. The ambitious circulation, advertising, and marketing whizzes who worked for him often found themselves concealing or downplaying their successes, while by the 1960s DeWitt and Lila Wallace were becoming two of the most generous philanthropists of all time.

The greatest conflicts at the magazine arose from conflicts within himself — unsurprisingly, since it was ultimately such a one-man show. In 1965 Wallace showed up unexpectedly at an annual Christmas Eve party given by his longtime business manager Al Cole, who with him had built the *Digest* empire. He announced at Cole's party that Cole was fired. This was because Wallace's wife, Lila Acheson Wallace, had recently learned of her husband's long affair with her niece Judy, wife of Al Cole's protégé Fred Thompson. Lila demanded both Cole's and Thompson's heads; Wallace gave her them. Cole had been Wallace's closest colleague, Thompson his heir apparent.

A couple of years earlier, while the affair was still going on, Wallace had given a dinner whose guests of honor were Nelson and Happy Rockefeller, and at it he had gravely proposed a toast to all the men there who were with their first wives. He was the only one.



Wallace died in 1981, Lila three years later. In the last years both suffered the indignities of advanced old age, growing enfeebled and less aware both of the magazine and of the considerable philanthropic works being done in their names. Finally, after their deaths, *Reader's Digest* became, without that odd, driven personality behind it, just another successful giant magazine. The Wallaces had wanted the *Digest* to stay private, owned by a consortium of charities; in 1990 it went public. Its chairman aped the founder's spirit by commissioning a company anthem called "I Can Make a Difference" and giving tapes of it to every employee; at the same time, traces of the Wallaces were obliterated. The only vestige of DeWitt Wallace was a portrait in the basement.

The *Digest* is seventy-two years old now; its chronicle is a long one. The author has done monumental research — his notes run to almost fifty of the book's 701 pages — and used it to tell a tale that for the most part glides along. Occasionally a bitter tone suggests that a battle is being recounted from the loser's dubious viewpoint, but to his credit the author has listed exactly who he interviewed for every chapter.

Who was Wallace? On the one hand, he was "the pragmatic editor who lived in a world rich with deadlines, assignments, great events, the rush to make the *Digest* a household name around the world. He was also a man passionately immersed in his own private, very male Disneyland populated with such attractions as poker parties, beautiful women, perfect martinis, Ping-Pong, blue humor, old cars, monoplanes, and travel. By the mid-sixties, however, another Wally had begun to emerge — a man who was better than his former self, better than the obdurate reactionary that was his editorial persona, a man evincing a genuine streak of nobility and largeness of spirit." And ultimately, "the perennial schoolboy and the unorthodox servant of mankind were the Janus-faced profile of the same individual."

The story of the *Digest* is fascinating because it is so much the story of that elusive, contradictory giant behind the magazine. He and his magazine now lie as well revealed as they ever will be. ♦

## SHORT TAKES

### TRIPLE PLAY IN LAOS

I was being paid ninety dollars a month to be the AP stringer in Laos, but in addition I had quietly agreed to fill in for an absent UPI reporter who was visiting Bangkok. I had also agreed to help out the Reuters Saigon correspondent, Bruce Russell, who was fruitlessly seeking a replacement for a departed stringer. I knew that the Agence France-Presse news agency reporter was on leave. I was the only journalist left in the whole country....

The embassy political staff sketched out the sorry details of the story with some embarrassment: the communist leader had escaped through the early-morning monsoons with all his jailers joining him and there was no clue to his immediate whereabouts.

My next stop was the telegraph office on nearby Sethathirat Street, where I arrived out of breath but with a clear



plan of action in mind. My first obligation was to the AP because that organization had hired me in good faith. On a cable form I carefully wrote in long hand an urgent news bulletin addressed to the agency's headquarters in Tokyo, conveying the facts of the dramatic escape. I passed it over to the waiting telex operator and as he punched the message into his machine I wrote a dispatch for UPI; their correspondent, Arthur Dommén, had agreed to pay me fifty dollars. To that report I added a few extra details of the search for the Red Prince and handed it over to the operator before proceeding with the Reuters version of the story. I added additional material to the telegraphed

accounts of the escape during the day and by evening was resting content that I had passed muster on my first serious international news story, thankful that the professional Agence France-Presse man, who would have shown me up as an incompetent, was out of town.

The next day Cavellerie handed me a sheaf of cables. The first was from the AP and it congratulated me on being eight minutes ahead of all others with the escape story. The next was from UPI, which complained I lagged on the initial story break but amply made up with better detail. The third was from Reuters thanking me for helping them out.

FROM **LIVE FROM THE BATTLEFIELD**, BY PETER ARNETT. SIMON & SCHUSTER. 463 PP. \$23.

### TIPS FROM O'NEILL

As Speaker, I had a fifteen-minute press conference every day. I rather enjoyed the banter, and the reporters soon learned I had no personal agenda or devious plans. And when I made a mistake like confusing "billions" with "millions" they wouldn't report it.

One time a particularly obnoxious reporter did a mean piece on me and demanded a follow-up interview. I called a press conference with all the press corps on Capitol Hill and he showed up with a stenographer to try to nail me. In front of all his colleagues, he ended up looking stupid.

Not all reporters are alike. Some are just doing their job. Others are out to get you. Don't help them make the story. Keep your cool.

My old pal Jimmie Burke used to say, "Don't write it if you can talk, don't talk if you can wink, and don't wink if you can nod."

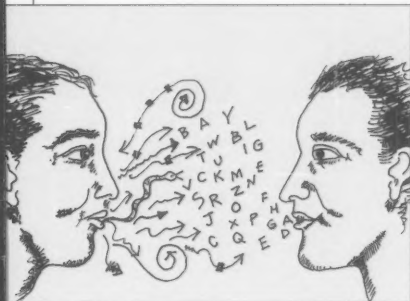
And take care of your local press first. They'll get the story straight. They usually want to help.

FROM **ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL AND OTHER RULES OF THE GAME**, BY TIP O'NEILL WITH GARY HYMEL. TIMES BOOKS. 190 PP. \$15.



## EASY VIRTUE

The First Amendment is not a self-declaring statement and will assume the form given to it by powerful and authoritative interpreters. And the moral that follows from that one is that the First Amendment does not in and of itself (finally a meaningless phrase) direct a politics but will display the political "spin" of whatever group has its hand on the interpretative machinery. "Free speech" is thus just like "fairness" and "merit" — rather than a concept that sits above the fray, monitoring its progress and keeping the combatants honest, it is right there in the middle of the fray, an object of contest that will enable those who capture it to parade their virtue at the easy expense of their opponents: we're for fairness and you are for biased judgment; we're for merit and you are for special interests; we're for objectivity and you are playing politics; we're for free speech and you are for censorship and ideological tyranny. It is a wonderful (not here a word of approbation)



strategy, and if it is pursued as successfully as it has been in recent years by the neoconservatives, the result is to place the opposition in the difficult position of having not only to respond to arguments but to dispute the very vocabulary in which the issues have come to be framed, a vocabulary which, because it occupies the rhetorical high ground, stigmatizes counterarguments ("you mean you're against fairness") even before they are heard.

**FROM THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FREE SPEECH...AND IT'S A GOOD THING TOO,**

BY STANLEY FISH.  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.  
322 PP. \$25

## JFK IN BRIEF

Kennedy liked reporters. He was the first modern president who did not call them "the boys." He . . . had learned their language. He was candid in private — not necessarily honest, but extraordinarily direct. There was a bonding in such sharing of secrets, a jargon of intimacy, false and compromising at the same time. His aides, all of them men, competed in describing sitting in business suits on toilets taking orders as he took long steaming baths to relieve the pain in his back — unaware



that Kennedy might be demonstrating his mastery over them. During the 1956 convention, [State Department legal advisor] Abram Chayes had picked up a telephone in Kennedy's hotel suite. It was Jacqueline Kennedy, and Chayes had gone into Kennedy's bedroom and found him reading in his underwear. "I'll take it out there," Kennedy said, and began to walk into the big sitting room. "Wait," Chayes said. "You can't go out there in your shorts, there are reporters and photographers there." Kennedy walked into the sitting room, saying just loud enough for all to hear: "Abe, I know these fellows. They're not going to take advantage of me."

They rarely did.

**FROM PRESIDENT KENNEDY: PROFILES OF POWER.**

BY RICHARD REEVES. SIMON & SCHUSTER. 798 PP. \$30

## REALITY CHECK

Near the end of the [1962 New York newspaper] strike I sold an article to *The Saturday Evening Post* for \$1,500, the equivalent of ten week's pay at the newspaper. It seemed like all the money in the world. Exuberantly, I paid off my



debts and gave the landlord the rent. I brought flowers to Ramona and hugged her and told her I loved her. I bought a bag of toys for the baby. I carried home fat bags of groceries. I lugged home cases of beer and invited Richie, Jake, Billy, and Tim and his wife, Georgie, over for a party. Celebration! Victory! Drink up! A few days later, Dorothy Schiff left the Publishers Association and reopened the newspaper. I went back to work.

Don't get used to being too happy, you Irish bum, Paul Sann said when I took him for a fast drink after work. No matter what happens, he said, newspapers will always break your fucking heart.

**FROM A DRINKING LIFE: A MEMOIR.** BY PETE HAMIL.

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.  
266 PP. \$21.95



# The Lower case



## Council can't find solution

Irvine [Calif.] World News 7/5/90

## Imposed Suicide Plan Urged At D.C. Juvenile Facilities

The Washington Post 2/2/93

## IU scientist has treatment to curb obsessive behavior

The Herald-Times [Bloomington, Ind.] 1/11/94

## Judge Acquits Detective In Doctor's Fatal Death

The New York Times 9/15/93

## Teen sex delayed when dad's around

The Miami [Fla.] Times 11/4/93

## Boy, declared dead, revives as family protests

The Columbus [Ohio] Dispatch 9/29/91

## Raffle Drawing For Baby At Pub, Jan. 8

Williams-Grand Canyon News 1/6/94

## Passover: It's holy week for Christians

The Sacramento Bee 3/22/91

## Correction

Because of a production error, the Pilot incorrectly printed in Genevieve A. Wanberg's obituary that her beloved kittens Snookie and Tootsie are residing with her. The obituary should have read her beloved kittens Snookie and Tootsie are now residing with her son in Oregon.

Petersburg [Alaska] Pilot 5/2/91

■ An article in Saturday's Local section incorrectly reported that a suspect identified as "Fnu Lnu" had been indicted by a federal grand jury. "Fnu Lnu" is not a name. FNU is a law enforcement abbreviation for "first name unknown," LNU for "last name unknown." Officials knew the suspect only by the nickname "Dezo."

Daily Press [Newport News, Va.] 1/21/94

## Alcohol Consumption Recommended At New Restaurant

Temple [Tex.] Daily Telegram 4/22/92



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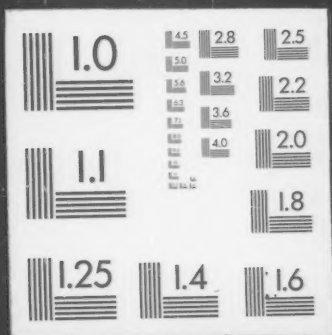


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